

LION



ANNUAL
1960



How People Travel

IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

DOG-SLED
(CANADA)



CABLE-LIFT
(ITALY)



PEDICAR
(FORMOSA)



RICKSHAW
(ZULULAND)



BALSA BOAT
(SOUTH AMERICA)



PACK CAMELS
(NORTH AFRICA)



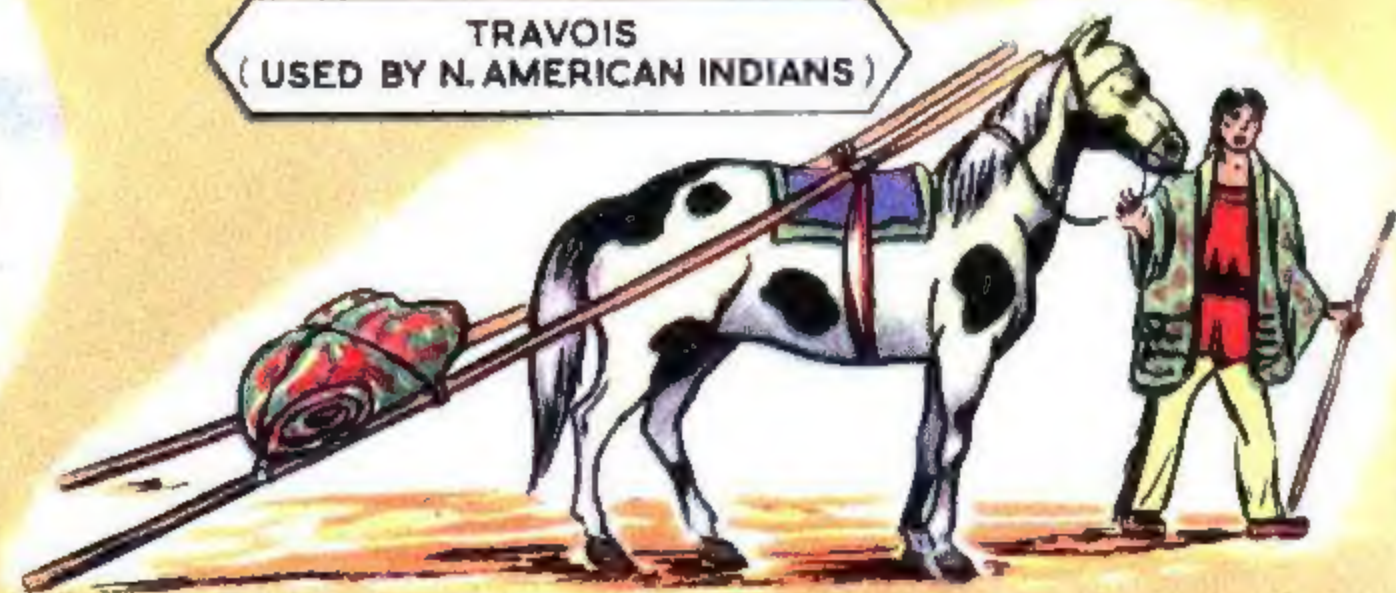
JUNK
(CHINA)



YAK
(TIBET)



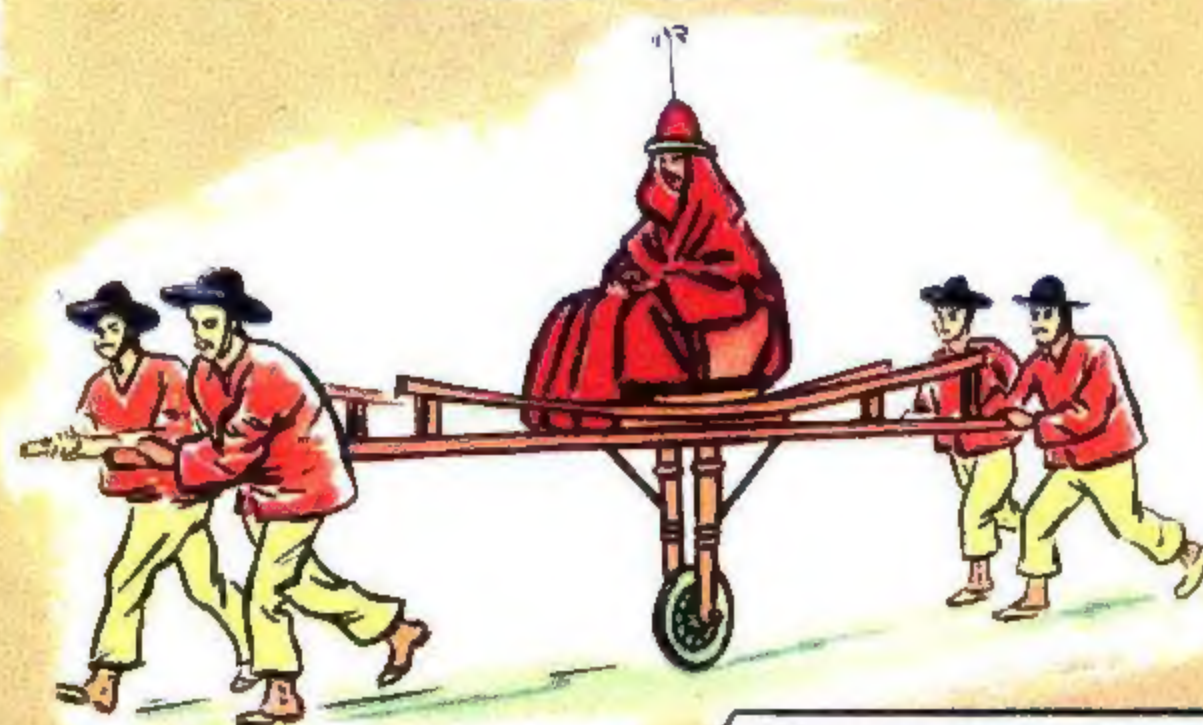
TRAVOIS
(USED BY N. AMERICAN INDIANS)



CANOE
(CANADA)



NOBLEMAN'S CARRIAGE
(KOREA)



BABY-CARRIER
(CHINA)



ONE-MAN HELI-SCOOTER
(UNITED STATES)



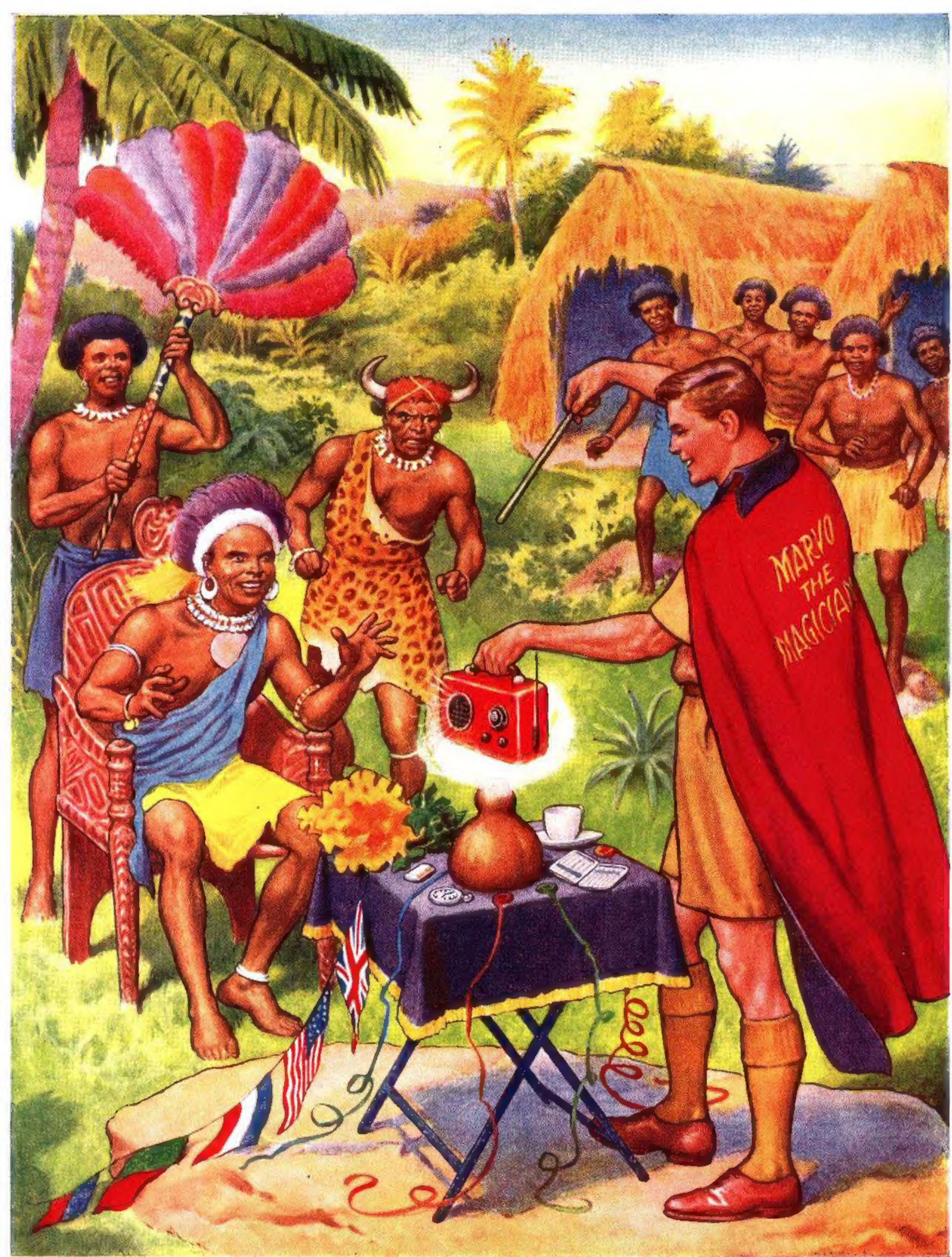
GONDOLA
(VENICE -- ITALY)



DIESEL TRAIN
(UNITED STATES)



PRICE
8/6
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LION ANNUAL

1960



Issued from
THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

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SANDY DEAN and The DOG THAT WENT TO SCHOOL

BY
GEORGE
FORREST

SANDY DEAN AND HIS PALS, JACK HARDY AND OWL WATSON, WERE IN THE FOURTH FORM AT TOLLGATE. THEY WERE RETURNING TO THE SCHOOL ONE DAY AFTER DINNER WHEN A DOG BOUNDED UP TO SANDY



SANDY EXAMINED THE DOG'S COLLAR - BUT IT BORE NO NAME OR ADDRESS. AND THE ANIMAL CONTINUED TO DANCE AROUND EXCITEDLY



NEXT MOMENT, THE DOG BEGAN TO TUG AT SANDY'S TROUSER LEG



ALL AT ONCE, SANDY GAVE A CRY OF UNDERSTANDING



BUT WE CAN'T FOLLOW HIM NOW. THERE ISN'T THE TIME. WE'RE DUE FOR ART CLASS IN TEN MINUTES



COME ON, OLD FELLOW. DON'T WORRY. WE'LL FOLLOW YOU THE FIRST CHANCE WE GET. YOU CAN TRUST US



AT THAT INSTANT HAUGHTY HAWKINS, AN UNPOPULAR PREFECT, APPEARED

GET THAT ANIMAL OUT OF HERE! YOU KNOW PETS ARE FORBIDDEN!

GOSH, HAVE A HEART, HAUGHTY! WE FOUND HIM. WE ONLY INTEND TO KEEP HIM SAFE UNTIL AFTER SCHOOL



HAUGHTY REFUSED TO LISTEN TO ANY EXPLANATIONS

OUT WITH THE BRUTE! WE DON'T WANT ANY LOST DOGS IN HERE. IF I CATCH YOU WITH IT AGAIN, THERE'LL BE TROUBLE



ALTHOUGH SANDY HURRIED BACK TO THE ROAD, HE WAS DETERMINED NOT TO DRIVE THE DOG AWAY

WE'LL SMUGGLE HIM IN THROUGH THE FENCE NEAR THE CYCLE SHEDS. I KNOW JUST THE PLACE TO KEEP HIM WHERE HAUGHTY WON'T FIND HIM



BY PULLING OUT SOME LOOSE NAILS IN THE FENCE, THE PALS WERE ABLE TO SLIP INTO THE SCHOOL GROUNDS

IN WE GO, SPOTTY. WE WON'T LET YOU DOWN

WE CAN EASILY REPLACE THE PALINGS



WE'LL TETHER HIM IN THE OLD SUMMER-HOUSE. HE'LL BE SAFE THERE UNTIL AFTER LESSONS

GOOD IDEA!

AND I'LL GET SOME BONES FROM THE COOK TO KEEP HIM QUIET



IT WAS AS THEY WERE APPROACHING THE SUMMER-HOUSE THAT THE PALS WERE SPOTTED BY BOSSY BATES AND CO., THE FOURTH-FORM BULLIES

I SAY - THAT'S THE DOG WHICH HAUGHTY ORDERED THEM TO GET RID OF WHAT'S THEIR GAME?



IT LOOKS A PRETTY VALUABLE HOUND. I BET IT'S LOST - AND THEY MEAN TO TAKE IT TO THE POLICE SO THEY CAN COLLECT SOME REWARD MONEY. LET'S FOLLOW THEM. WE MIGHT DO OURSELVES A BIT OF GOOD!

SANDY AND CO. MADE SPOTTY AS COMFORTABLE AS POSSIBLE

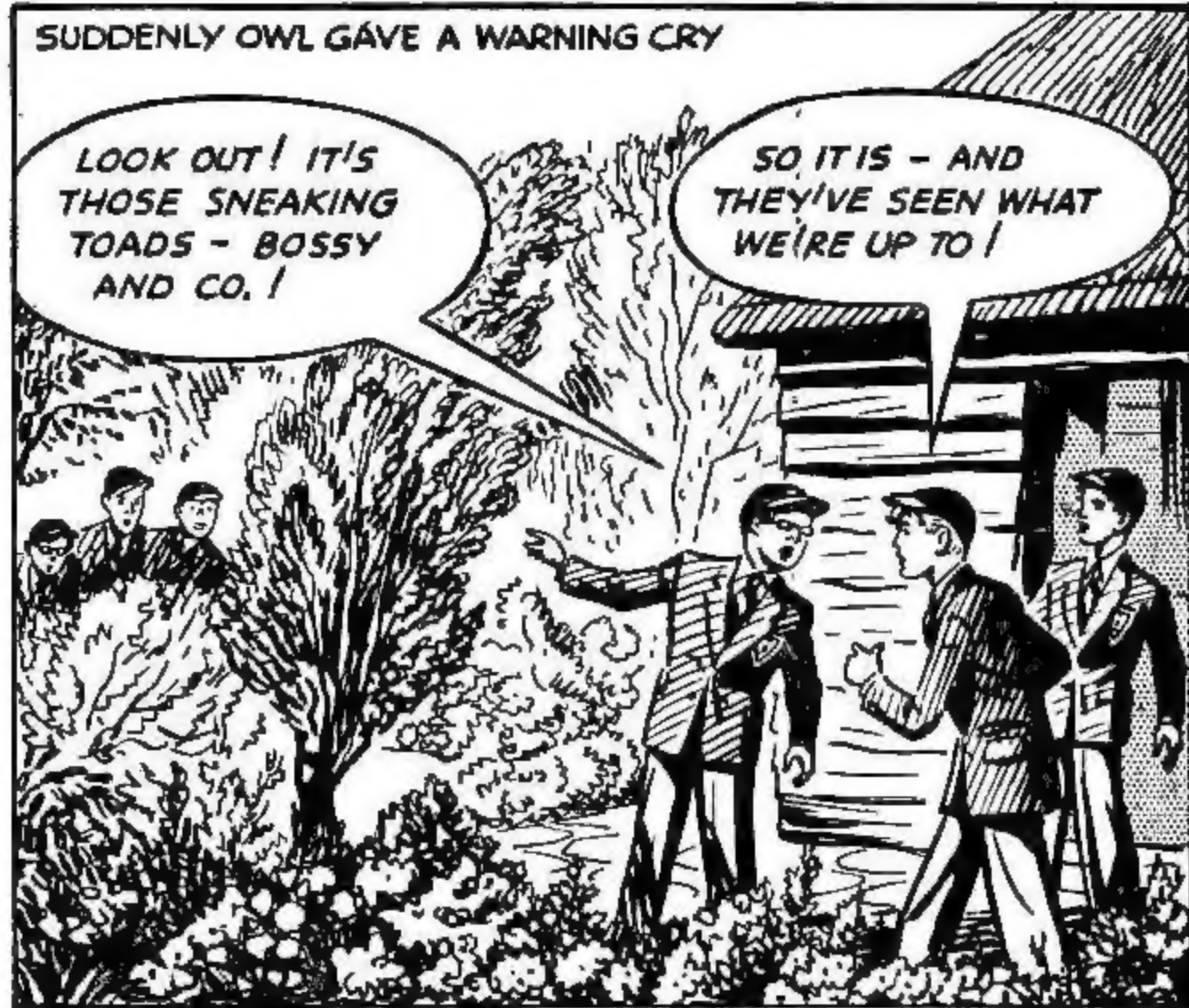
THERE YOU ARE, OLD CHAP! WE'LL LEAVE YOU WITH FOOD AND WATER UNTIL WE'RE FREE TO FOLLOW YOU



SUDDENLY OWL GAVE A WARNING CRY

LOOK OUT! IT'S THOSE SNEAKING TOADS - BOSSY AND CO.!

SO IT IS - AND THEY'VE SEEN WHAT WE'RE UP TO!



GRINNING, BOSSY AND HIS CRONIES HURRIED AWAY IN READINESS FOR THE ART LESSON

HA, HA, HA! WE KNOW YOU'RE AFTER A REWARD. BUT YOU'LL BE UNLUCKY. FOR WE'RE GOING TO NIP IN AHEAD OF YOU AS SOON AS THE CLASS DISMISSES



WE'LL PIP YOU ON THE POST, JUST YOU SEE!

SANDY'S EYES FLASHED



THAT'S EXACTLY THE SORT OF TRICK THAT ONE WOULD EXPECT FROM THOSE CLOTS. WELL, THERE'S NO TIME TO HIDE THE DOG SOMEWHERE ELSE. SO WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT BOSSY AND CO. DON'T LEAVE CLASS BEFORE US. IF THEY DO, THEY'LL GRAB SPOTTY AND RUSH HIM OFF TO THE POLICE STATION

LEAVING THE DOG, THE PALS DASHED OFF TO SCHOOL. THEY NOW FELT MORE CERTAIN THAN EVER THAT SPOTTY HAD SOME VITAL REASON FOR WISHING TO BE FOLLOWED



AT LAST THEY REACHED THE ART-ROOM WHERE MR. BRINK, A SHORT-SIGHTED MASTER, WAS IN CHARGE

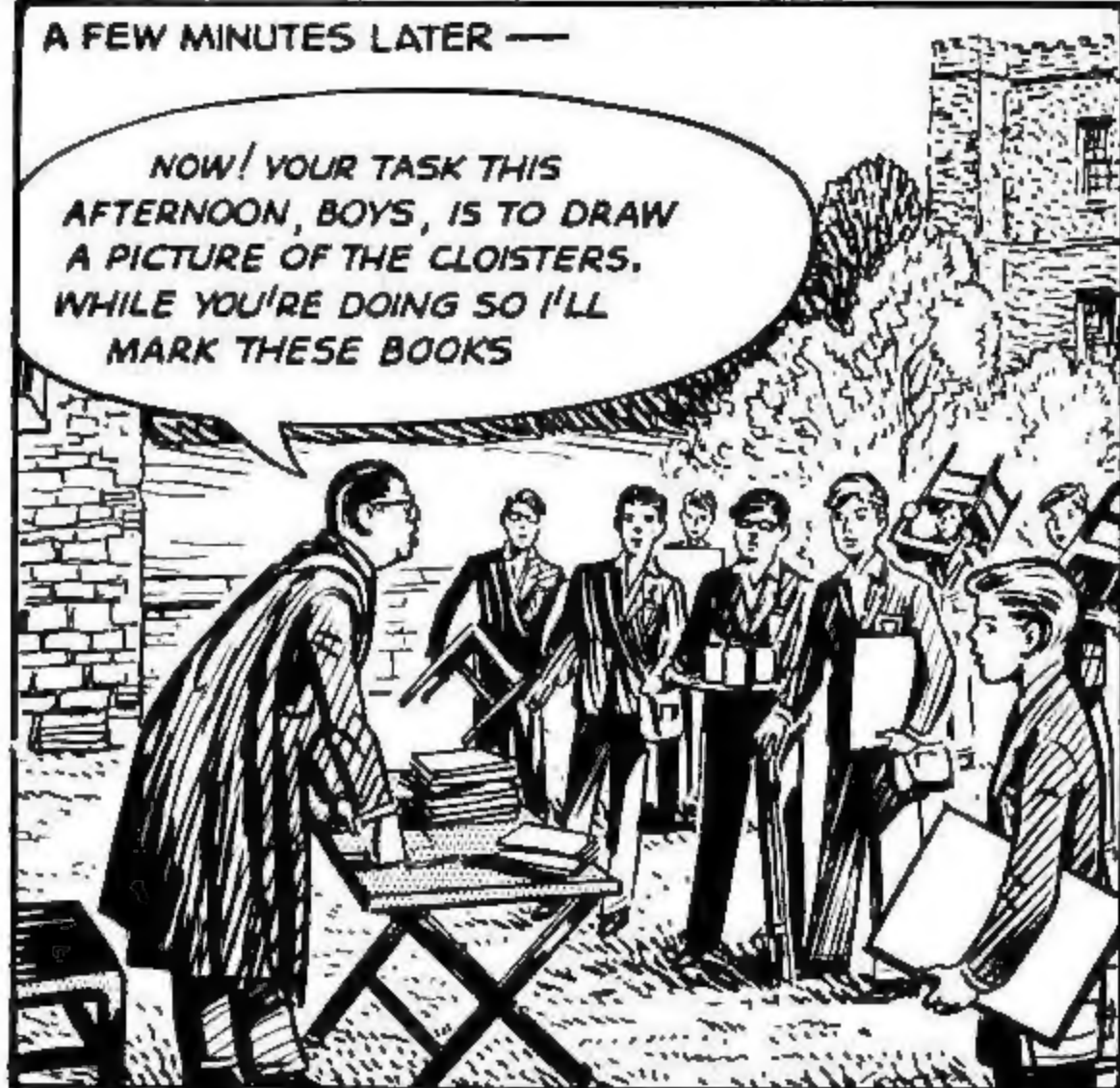
GOSH, WHAT'S HAPPENING, SIR?



HURRY UP, YOU THREE. COLLECT YOUR CHAIRS AND EASELS. THIS AFTERNOON'S LESSON WILL BE IN THE SCHOOL GROUNDS

A FEW MINUTES LATER —

NOW! YOUR TASK THIS AFTERNOON, BOYS, IS TO DRAW A PICTURE OF THE CLOISTERS. WHILE YOU'RE DOING SO I'LL MARK THESE BOOKS



THE FORM GOT DOWN TO WORK — BUT SANDY AND CO.'S THOUGHTS WERE MAINLY OF THE DOG!

BE READY TO SPRINT FOR THE SUMMER — HOUSE THE MOMENT THE CLASS ENDS. OLD SPOTTY DEPENDS ON US!

OKEY DOKE AND WE'LL SEE THAT BOSSY AND HIS GOONS DON'T TRY ANY FUNNY BUSINESS



SUDDENLY BOSSY TURNED TO HIS CRONIES



THIS STICK OF WHITE CHALK AND THE BLAZING SUN GIVE ME AN IDEA! LISTEN — I'VE THE PERFECT WHEEZE FOR TAKING THAT POODLE TO THE COPS BEFORE SANDY DEAN AND HIS CROWD EVER GET NEAR IT

BOSSY'S NEXT ACTION BROUGHT A GASP OF AMAZEMENT FROM JACK

WHAT ON EARTH'S BOSSY UP TO? HE'S WHITENING HIS FACE WITH WHITE CHALK

LOOK OUT FOR TROUBLE! HE MUST BE UP TO SOME CRAFTY GAME!



WHEN HIS FACE WAS WELL COATED, BOSSY LET OUT A GROAN AND SLUMPED BACK

AAAH — THE HEAT —!



SIR, BATES IS ILL! IT'S SUN-STROKE!

MR. BRINK PEERED SHORT-SIGHTEDLY AT BOSSY

GOOD GRACIOUS! THE POOR BOY'S AS WHITE AS A SHEET. HELP HIM ALONG TO MATRON AT ONCE



CERTAINLY, SIR!

JACK INSTANTLY REALISED BOSSY'S INTENTION

IT'S A RUSE! THE CUNNING SPOOFERS HAVE PLOTTED TO GRAB SPOTTY BEFORE WE'RE FREE FROM CLASS!

SANDY - WE'VE GOT TO STOP THEM! BUT HOW? MR. BRINK WILL NEVER FALL FOR THE SAME WANGLE TWICE!

SANDY'S GAZE FELL ON SEVERAL SACKS WHICH HAD BEEN FILLED WITH GRASS BY THE GARDENER. LIKE A SHOT HE DARTED ACROSS TO THEM

QUICK! WE'LL PUT OUR BLAZERS OVER THREE OF THEM AND USE THEM AS DUMMIES. PERAPS WE CAN KID MR. BRINK INTO THINKING THEY'RE US!

FEVERISHLY SANDY AND CO. GOT BUSY

PLACE HANDKERCHIEFS ON TOP OF THEIR HEADS AS IF PROTECTION FROM THE SUN

HURRY! IF MR. BRINK LOOKS UP BEFORE WE'VE FINISHED, WE'RE SUNK!

COME ON! NOW TO NIP OFF!

UNSEEN BY THE SHORT-SIGHTED MASTER, SANDY AND HIS PALS SUCCESSFULLY SPED AWAY INTO COVER

MAKE STRAIGHT FOR THE SUMMER-HOUSE!

HARDLY HAD THE CHUMS VANISHED THAN MR. BRINK GLANCED AT THE DUMMIES



AH, IT'S MOST GRATIFYING TO SEE DEAN AND HIS FRIENDS SO INTENT ON THEIR WORK! I REGRET THAT I'VE OFTEN THOUGHT OF THEM AS STUPID DUMMIES. TO ENCOURAGE THEM I'LL STROLL ACROSS AND SEE WHAT THEY'VE DONE

THE MASTER RESTED ONE HAND ON WHAT HE THOUGHT TO BE SANDY'S SHOULDER AND —



MR. BRINK THUNDERED AN ORDER TO HAUGHTY HAWKINS, WHO HAPPENED TO BE PASSING



MEANWHILE, BOSSY AND HIS CRONIES WERE IN THE ACT OF LEADING SPOTTY AWAY WHEN —



THE BULLIES TRIED TO ESCAPE WITH THEIR PRIZE, BUT —



IN THE COMMOTION THE LEASH TWISTED AROUND BOSSY'S LEG



AS BOSSY HURTLIED INTO THE FISH-POND, JACK UTTERED A GASP

OH, GOLLY! THE FAT'S IN THE FIRE NOW! HERE'S HAUGHTY!



THE PREFECT PELTED UP IN TRIUMPH



NOW YOU'RE FOR IT. I'M TAKING YOU BACK TO MR. BRINK. GEE - I SHOULDN'T LIKE TO BE IN YOUR SHOES!

OBVIOUSLY CONCLUDING THAT THE PALS COULDN'T HELP HIM, SPOTTY DECIDED TO GO OFF ON HIS OWN. BUT SANDY WASN'T LETTING HIM DOWN



IT'S ALL RIGHT, SPOTTY - I'M COMING, HAUGHTY OR NO HAUGHTY. I'M CERTAIN THAT YOU'VE A VERY SPECIAL REASON FOR TRYING TO PERSUADE US TO HELP YOU

JACK AND OWL TORE AFTER SANDY, WHILE HAUGHTY RACED IN PURSUIT



GOSH! I HOPE TO GOODNESS SPOTTY ISN'T LEADING US ON A WILD-GOOSE CHASE. IF HE IS, WE'LL SURE BE FOR THE HIGH JUMP WHEN WE GET BACK TO SCHOOL!

THE DOG SPED FOR A DERELICT MILL, WITH HAUGHTY BELLOWING FROM THE DISTANCE



STOP! STOP, YOU YOUNG SWEEPS!

DR. STANTON, TOLLGATE'S HEADMASTER, HAPPENED TO BE MOTORING ALONG THE NEARBY ROAD. ASTONISHED, HE BRAKED TO A HALT



THREE TOLLGATE BOYS DEFYING A PREFECT! WHAT ON EARTH'S GOING ON? I'D BETTER INVESTIGATE!

THE DOG BOUNDED UP THE RICKETY STAIRS OF THE OLD MILL

HE'S GOING INTO THAT ROOM AT THE TOP!



NEXT MOMENT —

WELL, I'M BLOWED! WE'LL SOON GET YOU FREE, SIR

THANK HEAVENS I'VE BEEN FOUND! I CAN'T MOVE. I'M PINNED DOWN BY THIS BEAM!



SANDY AND CO. HAD JUST RELEASED THE TRAPPED MAN, WHEN DR. STANTON ARRIVED — AND RECOGNISED HIM

WHY, IT'S MY OLD FRIEND COLONEL DANBURY! COLONEL — ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?



YES — THANKS TO THESE LADS. I'VE BEEN HERE FOR HOURS, UNABLE TO MOVE

THE COLONEL EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD BEEN TAKING A PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE WINDOW OF THE MILL WHEN THE BEAM FELL AND TRAPPED HIM. HIS DOG HAD RACED AWAY TO SEEK HELP. THEN SANDY RELATED THE PART HE AND HIS CHUMS HAD PLAYED



AFTER A PAUSE THE HEAD SMILED



ALTHOUGH YOU LADS HAVE BROKEN QUITE A NUMBER OF RULES, I MUST CONGRATULATE YOU UPON THE OUTCOME. YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE DOG'S BEHAVIOUR, AND YOUR DETERMINATION TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY BEHIND IT, HAVE RESULTED IN THE RESCUE OF THE COLONEL. WELL DONE!

THE COLONEL NODDED — AND DREW OUT HIS WALLET

AS A TOKEN OF MY APPRECIATION, PLEASE SHARE THESE POUND NOTES BETWEEN YOU

GEE, THANK YOU, SIR! BUT WE OWE IT ALL TO OLD SPOTTY

WE'LL BUY HIM THE MEATIEST BONE HE'S EVER HAD!



THE END

WHITE BOY BILL—PYGMY CHIEF

BY
RAY
MARR



WAR-SCARE!

RIGHT, Zalu and the rest of you, haul away there!"

From a frail canoe bobbing about in the rushing torrents of the mighty Tongola river, Bill Young shouted the command to the tiny figures on the bank. They were pygmies, members of the tribe which had made Bill their chief after he had fallen from an aeroplane into the jungle near their village. They had never seen a white lad before and had been convinced that he would bring them luck if he were chief.

The team on the bank now was led by Bill's pygmy pal, Zalu, and at the young chief's words all began to haul on a rope leading to the net the pygmies had constructed.

The cheerful natives had not been far wrong in their estimate of Bill's usefulness as a leader. He had soon discovered many ways of easing their hard jungle lives. Now they were working with a will at another of Bill's brainwaves.

The tribe at the moment were out for fish. These had grown scarce and the little people could no longer get enough by spearing them, so Bill had decided to net some.

The net had been laid right across the river in front of a school of fish. When the pygmies hauled in the fish would be trapped.

As they took the strain, the pygmies began to chant.

"Great is our Chief and plenty wise,
Swift like fish and strong like lion,
Sees all things with eagle eyes,
Pity prey he has his eye on."

Anxiously Bill watched as the net curved to the pull of the rushing water and the pygmies' strength. Had he set it far enough out? Would the fish be trapped? It was important to make a good haul, for the pygmies badly needed some fish for their diet.

Then there came a whoop of triumph from the bank!

Within the half circle of the net the surface of the water was beginning to bubble. Here and there the glint of a silver flank could be seen as the fish seeking escape darted this way and that!

"Got them," Bill breathed in relief. "We're sure of a good haul now."

Steadily the net was drawn closer and closer to the bank, confining the fish to an ever shrinking area of

War Threatened Between Rival Tribes — Until Bill Tackled the Dispute!

water. It seemed that nothing could stop the pygmies now.

Now other pygmies moved forward. These were to step down into the water and scoop out the fish with baskets.

But before the first man could wet his feet, a big canoe came swooping round a bend in the river, heading downstream.

As he saw it, Bill yelled a warning. But if the warning was heard, it was not heeded.

On the contrary, the canoe changed direction to run close to the bank. It was now heading straight for the net, driven on at breakneck speed by the strength of its twenty paddlers!

"Look out," Bill yelled again. "You're running into our net."

Frantically he waved. But still the canoe sped on. . . pell mell at the net!

Helplessly Bill saw the sharp prow hit!

The next moment the pygmies went sprawling on their backs as the rope parted, and the net swung open.

The fish were free to escape, and they took their chance!

Furiously Bill paddled towards the big canoe. He had recognised it as belonging to the Zumbusu tribe, close neighbours of the pygmies.

Ajiko, the Zumbusu Chief, was seated at the stern, with a pleased smile on his face. But Bill saw unveiled hostility in his eyes. It had been no accident!

"What do you think you're doing?" Bill rapped as he pulled alongside the canoe, now being held close to the bank. "You parted our net. You made us lose our fish."

"Ajiko is knowing," was the other Chief's answer. "Ajiko mean to part net. Fish too few in river now, and not right you people catch all. None for us then!"

"This is our bit of river," Bill gritted, shaking his head. "And you know it."

"Ours!" scowled the Zumbusu. "Since my father's father is a boy we men come catch our fish here."

"Not so," croaked Bomboso, the oldest pygmy. "We people all time fishing here. When I be boy I take fifteen fish in this very place. Good big fish, too. Not like little things that come now."

That was true enough anyway, Bill thought. The fish certainly were very small this year, as well as being scarce. What had happened to them and why there were none of the river giants they had known in other seasons nobody knew. It was not that there had been any lack of rain to bring the fish upstream. There had been plenty, but still they had not come.

Nevertheless this was a puzzle to solve another time, Bill reflected.

For the situation now was growing more dangerous than a mere lack of fish.

"Bah, Bomboso," sneered Ajiko. "You never catch fifteen fish in one day in all life. I know you pygmies. You throw spears like children. Fish! How you spear fish? Not like we men whose eyes are as eyes of eagle!"

"Eeyah!" howled a pygmy. "So we not can throw spears? Watch this then!"

Bill caught a sidelong glimpse of a pygmy arm raised, drawn back, then a razor edged spear was hissing through the air—straight at Ajiko.

A cold hand clutched at Bill's heart. If the taunted pygmy's spear went home it would mean a long and terrible war.

"Thlunk!"

The blade had hit home all right.

But not into Ajiko's heart.

For even as the spear flashed forward, Bill had acted. His paddle blade shot forward in a move of lightning speed. Instead of the spear hitting the chief, it bit into the wood of the paddle blade.

And even as he saved Ajiko, Bill was on his feet. For in a moment the Zumbusu would be reaching for their spears too.

To the pygmies, Bill yelled: "Drop your spears."

And to the Zumbusu he shouted: "There will be no fight."

As he spoke, he jumped from his canoe into the big Zumbusu vessel.

"Behold, Ajiko," he called. "I am unarmed. I come in peace, I am sorry that spear was thrown, but you should not have spoken so. There will be no more. My men dare not throw or they may hit me. Now order your men to lay down their spears."

Ajiko looked at Bill with unconcealed admiration. Then he barked an order to his men. They dropped their spears.

"That was well done, white boy. You are a worthy chief," he said. "Another moment's passing and there would have been a war. But how know you that now you are in our power we not kill you?"

"I trust you," Bill said. "By my action, you saw that the thrown spear was but a hasty deed in the anger of the moment. You have no need to kill me."

"Also," said the voice of Zalu from the bank above, "you know, Chief of the Zumbusu, that if our Chief be harmed in the least then not a man of you would live."

There was no mistaking the little native's meaning and silence fell on the two tribes, a silence in which Bill's mind was hard at work. Peace had been saved for the moment. But how long would it last? Would there not be another flare-up as soon as fishing began again? Both tribes claimed the river fishing, so the only hope of avoiding war was to settle that fishing dispute.

Idea after idea flashed through Bill's mind. Then quite suddenly he had it.

He looked right at the rival Chief.

"There has been talk of spears and spearmanship," he said slowly. "Let us put it to the test. Are my people better spearmen than the Zumbusu? If they are then the river is ours. But if yours are the better we will fish here no longer!"

LAST MAN IN!

IT was a master stroke.

All the tension vanished from the air, for there was nothing the tribesmen liked better than a contest in their own special skills. Now an eager hubbub began with both pygmies and the Zumbusu boasting how good they were with the spear.

Quickly Bill explained his plan. A little way downstream were some rapids. Into the river above the rapids melons would be thrown. As they swirled down through the turbulent water they would make tricky targets, bobbing this way and that, drawn right under the surface sometimes. They would make a real test of spearing skill.

"From each of our tribes let ten men be chosen," Bill went on. "Let there be twenty melons—and that tribe which strikes the most melons shall have the river."

"It is good," chuckled Ajiko. "It is very good. I think the little people will fish no more."

The melons were quickly brought from the pygmy fields. The two tribes moved down the river to the rapids. But before the contest started, Bill called a pygmy forward. It was Tutu, the man who had thrown the spear which had so nearly started a war.

"O Tutu," Bill said sternly. "You did a bad

thing when you cast a spear at Ajiko. For that you must be punished."

"It is just," agreed Tutu miserably. "I was wrong."

"Your punishment is this," Bill went on. "While all the rest are here for the spearing contest, you will go home to the village. There you will cut firewood until I return."

"Aiye!" cried Tutu. "This most harsh, O Chief. Please, some other punishment. Or let Ajiko punish me. But let me see spearing."

"No," said Bill. "You must go . . . and while you go—think of your crime."

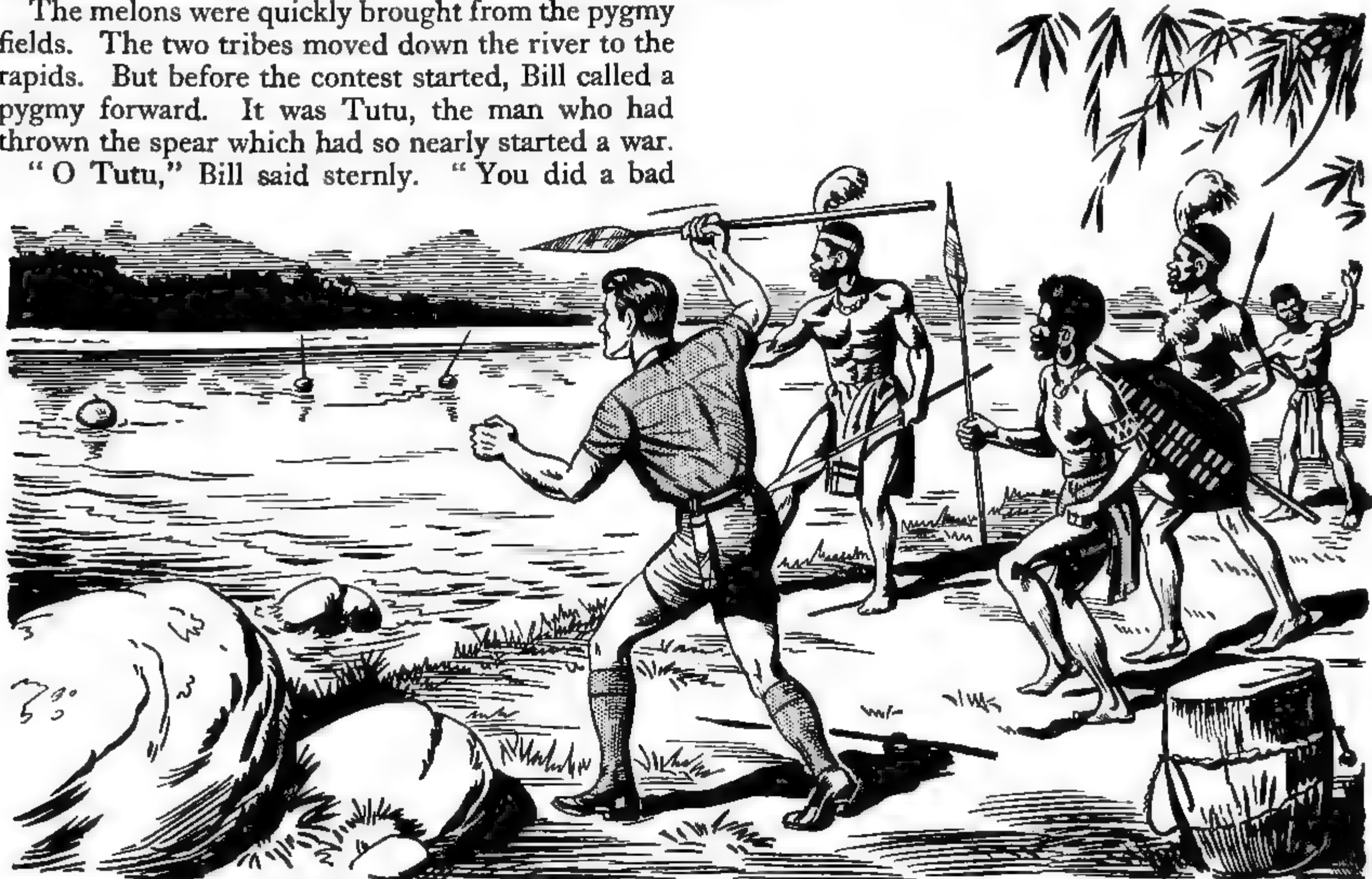
Gloomily the pygmy trotted away. He would go to the village, Bill knew. He would not dream of disobeying. It was just about the most severe punishment the young Chief could have given. This contest would be talked of for years, and only Tutu would have no memories of it. Yet it was well deserved. By his rashness Tutu had almost caused a war!

Ajiko nodded approvingly.

"You have much wisdom, White Boy," he said.

"Now let us see if you have spearmen."

It was agreed that all the melons would be released at once. The spearmen were to stand on the bank alternately, first a pygmy, then a Zumbusu and so on, so that each tribe would have an equal chance.



Tensely Bill raised his spear and prepared to throw it at the melon. If he missed, his tribe would lose the contest on which their food depended!

Below the rapids men would be waiting to gather up the speared melons and take the score for each tribe.

Bill had not planned to throw any spears himself, for this was one art in which he had to give best to the pygmies, brought up in the jungle.

But Ajiko took his place in the Zumbusu line and looked at Bill.

"So you not throw?" he asked. "You got fear?"

Bill's lips tightened. He could see Ajiko's good opinion of him dwindling visibly. He could not refuse the challenge. From a pygmy he took a bundle of spears and strode into the line—choosing a spot at the foot in the hope that all the melons would have gone before they reached him.

The pygmy spears were decorated with streaks of bright vegetable dye. There would be no difficulty afterwards in telling who owned which.

"All ready?" Bill called as the excitement mounted along the bank. "Right, Zalu."

His pygmy pal put a buffalo horn to his lips and blew a long blast. It was the signal for the start of the contest.

From upstream shrill screams told that the melons had been thrown into the turbulent current. An instant later the first came into sight, bobbing and dancing on the foam sprayed water.

At once a keen-edged pygmy spear flashed down, accompanied by a whoop of triumph.

"I got! I got!"

Then the noise grew deafening as spears flashed into the bubbling water. The two tribes either yelled their triumph or groaned aloud, depending on the accuracy of their aim.

Zalu was not throwing. His task was to watch the others and report to Bill.

"We got two," he gabbled excitedly. "Now three . . . Zumbusu miss one—no, they got . . . Aiyee . . . Imboku miss . . . No . . . yes . . . But Zimzim get it. . ."

It was an absolutely even contest as the spears flashed and flew. The first melons, transfixed with spears, began to drift past Bill.

"Ajiko miss!" howled Zalu. "Aiyee . . . he get with second spear . . . They got six . . . seven. We got eight . . . they got eight . . . Nine. . ."

Bill's pygmy pal was fairly skipping up and down with excitement as he howled out the score. Somebody was frenziedly beating a drum. Men of both tribes ran and skipped up and down the bank, yelling encouragement, or hooting at the other side. They were completely lost in the thrill of the contest.

"They got nine," Zalu yelled, almost deafening Bill. "We got too . . . Eeyah. They got ten . . ."

Bill's grip tightened on his spear. Ten to the Zumbusu! That could not be beaten. But at all

costs it had to be equalled. The pygmies had to get the last melon if they were to tie in the contest.

But the last melon had been caught by a quirk of the current. It did not take the route the others had followed. It swirled suddenly between two boulders and was carried far out across the stream.

Spear after spear fell short.

The Zumbusu began to raise a chant of triumph. It seemed certain that they had won the contest. The river would be theirs.

The last pygmy threw his spear. Straight and true it went, right for the melon, and Bill felt a surge of hope.

But the shot was at the absolute limit of the pygmy's range. The dropping spear did not pierce the bobbing fruit. It only scored the skin—and dropped uselessly into the water.

Then only Bill was left, Bill who had no claims to being an expert with the spear. On his throw would depend the pygmies' future. If he missed they would lose the right to fish in the river!

All along the banks silence fell. Zumbusu and pygmies alike were watching breathlessly as Bill poised himself to throw.

Far out the melon bobbed down, level with Bill, a tiny, almost unhittable target.

Like a statue Bill stood poised while the melon bobbed past him.

"Why he not throw?" Zalu groaned silently. "It go too far!"

But there was purpose in Bill's delay.

For suddenly the melon stopped moving. It was caught in an eddy behind a rock, an eddy that Bill had spotted.

And, for a few seconds as it floated motionless, it was a far easier target. This was the moment Bill had waited for.

Bill whipped into sudden action.

His spear shot out across the river in a slow, graceful curve.

"He miss, he miss," gabbled Ajiko.

But even as he spoke a roar of triumph rose . . . from the pygmies!

"Our Chief hit. Our Chief hit."

Fair and square Bill's spear plunged into the melon, almost slicing it in half.

Now the noise was tremendous. Even the Zumbusu could not help cheering.

As they made their way down the river to where the melons had been collected, Ajiko strode towards Bill, hand outstretched.

"That great spear throw," he said generously. "Never will I see better . . . But what we do now? I think we both hit same number!"

It was true, they found as they reached the foot of the rapids. Two neat rows of melons had been set out, one for each tribe—and there were ten melons in each row.

But Bill had no time to think of an answer to the problem. For he had spotted a panting figure among the pygmies.

"Tutu!" he cried. "You have disobeyed my orders. You did not go to the village!"

But the pygmy nodded his head vigorously.

"I go, O Chief," he panted breathlessly. "And now I come back. Aiyee, O Chief, most bad thing."

He was almost exhausted but he gasped out his news. He had reached the village just in time to find it being looted by a gang of men, of the Wimpo tribe, he thought.

"They see no one there," Tutu panted. "So they steal many things!"

"The Wimpo!" Bill rapped. "They're the biggest thieves in the district. Well, they're not getting away with this. Back to the village, everyone!"

"We come too," said Ajiko eagerly. "We help. For Wimpo rob us also two days ago. Glad to help catch."

"You're welcome," Bill nodded.

And so the two tribes which had been such deadly rivals only a short while before were comrades in arms now. They went racing through the jungle—to trap the thieves in the pygmy village.

The Wimpo were due for a nasty shock, Bill thought. He had already learned from Tutu that the robbers had not seen him. There was a good chance of catching them in the very act of their robbery.

Under Bill's direction the two tribes spread out to surround the village and prevent any escape. On a signal from Bill every man went whooping forward from his cover.

But disappointment awaited them. As they charged into the village, they found it was deserted. The thieves had robbed and gone.

"Much sorry," said Ajiko. "Like to catch those Wimpo."

Bill took one quick glance round his village. Everything was in a state of chaos. And the village storehouse door had been ripped from its hinges.

"All our stores gone," Bill gritted. "All our dried food, our salt, our iron . . . By thunder, they're not getting away with this."

It was a real disaster. Everything of value that the village owned had been taken. Sadly Ajiko shook his head.

"Much sorry, white boy," he sighed. "But all things gone never come back. Wimpo, they like shadows in jungle, leave no tracks, never be caught."

"Is that so?" rapped Bill hotly. "Well, they've never been tracked by the pygmies before!"

He knew how his keen-eyed little people excelled all the other jungle dwellers as trackers. If anyone could find the Wimpo it would be the pygmies.

And already they were casting about for signs. The keen-eyed pygmies soon picked up the trail, though it could have been seen by no one else. The hunt was on.

At a quick pace they trotted through the jungle, hardly pausing.

"They're making for the river," Bill said at last. "We'll have a chance of catching them there. They've taken so much stuff they'll have to make a lot of trips to get it across in their canoe."

The point where they reached the river was far downstream from the pygmy village, a broad pool studded with islands and with scarcely any current.

As Bill sighted it, he saw the fugitives. And he saw why they had picked this spot. They were not using a canoe. They had made a big raft on which their loot was piled. This was about the only place on the river where they could have used a raft. Elsewhere the current would have been too strong.

One of the Zumbusu burst forward to hurl a spear. It fell short and the Wimpo who saw its fall turned to jeer and yell and wave tauntingly. They thought they were safe. Once across the river they would be well ahead of the pursuers.

"We go get our canoe," said Ajiko. "Follow them. But I think we lose too much time."

Bill nodded agreement. By the time the Zumbusu hurried up the river and then brought their canoe down again, the Wimpo would be well away.

If the pygmies were to get their stores back then the Wimpo must be halted . . . now!

THE ISLAND OF CROCODILES!

BUT how could they be halted? They were out of spear range, almost beyond arrow shot. Even if spears could have reached them, Bill would hesitate to shed blood, even to get the precious stores back.

Then he saw the answer. Abruptly he darted up the river, calling to the others to follow. He halted at where two tall palms stood close together.

"Quickly," he called. "Those creepers . . . a rope. . ."

It was only a matter of seconds before two tough creeper ropes had been fastened to the tops of the palms. In the river the Wimpo had stopped poling their raft to yell taunts.

"Heave away," Bill ordered.

With all the men of both tribes pulling together, the palms were bent over until their tips touched the ground. With deft speed Bill lashed two short pieces of wood between the trunks, at the tips, joining them together.

"That boulder," he called. "Bring it here."

The big rock was brought forward and set on the platform.

"Right," Bill ordered. "Stand clear."

The ropes were now tied to two other trees.

holding the palms bent in the form of a giant catapult. Bill drew his knife.

"Stand clear," he called.

The knife flashed down.

Whoosh!

The palm trees flashed erect, and the boulder was hurled high into the air. Out across the river it soared, far past the Wimpo raft. Bill gave a little sigh of relief for he could not have been absolutely certain of the giant catapult's range beforehand.

On the Wimpo raft there was a moment of awe-struck silence as the boulder sped overhead to land with a tremendous splash in the river. Then Bill heard the sound of argument.

"Pull the trees down again," he rapped to his men.

Then he cupped his hands and shouted to the Wimpo.

"Come back and surrender," he shouted. "You can't escape."

Some of the Wimpo seemed to agree, and Bill could see there was an argument going on.

The raft began to move away again.

"All right," Bill rapped. "If that's the way you want it."

Already the trees were bent again and another boulder in place. Bill stood ready, knife in hand. But he did not cut the rope at once. Deliberately he waited, eyes narrowed to judge the range.

Then the knife flashed down once more.

It was a perfect shot. The rock landed just ahead of the raft—as Bill had planned. The tossing tumult of water spilled the Wimpo off the raft and into the water—though the loot was still securely lashed in place.

The raft drifted off downstream, and now the raiders swam towards the nearest island.

And there, to the watchers' amazement, they all clambered quickly up trees! Soon every man was perched in a tree.

"What they do?" gasped Zalu.

But Bill had been eyeing the islet narrowly, and suddenly he slapped his leg.

"I get it! Just take a look into those bushes!"

The bushes all over the island seemed to be moving under the pressure of huge bodies.

"Crocodile!" blurted Zalu. "Many, many crocodile!"

"Yes, the island's alive with them," Bill agreed.

"No wonder the Wimpo shinned up the trees."

He began to laugh as Ajiko came to his side.

"We'll leave the Wimpo there for a little," he said. "They can't escape, and it'll teach them a lesson. Meanwhile, we'll go and collect the raft . . . and the things which the Wimpo stole from our village."

It was some time before the raft drifted close enough to be hauled ashore. Not only were the pygmies stores on board, but also those stolen from the Zumbusu. Quickly the two tribes recovered their property.

"Now we go home," beamed Ajiko. "Crocodiles finish punishment of Wimpo men. They never steal again."

"No. We can't just abandon them," said Bill, shaking his head. "We'll have to get them off. . ."

The Zumbusu looked quite disgusted at the idea of rescuing the men who had robbed them. But their respect for Bill was now so great that they did not argue.

Soon the raft was being poled out to the islet, packed with Zumbusu and pygmy spearmen.

The deadly crocodiles surged eagerly towards this new prey. But the spears met them as they charged, and soon every one of the savage reptiles had been killed.

At length the cringing Wimpo descended from their trees.

"Mercy!" cried their leader.

"Mercy you may get," Bill said. "But first you must undo the wrong you have done. You must carry back all the goods you stole. You must repair any buildings you have damaged."

"We do, we do," cried the leader.

They were ferried to the bank. At once they began to gather up their loads to set off back to the pygmy and Zumbusu villages.

"You were too easy," declared Ajiko. "They should be beaten also."

"I don't know," said Bill. "In a way we should be grateful to them."

Ajiko was frowning as he looked at the water.

"Other thing I think," he said. "What about river? Not decided yet whose is fishing. We have another spear contest?"

Bill shook his head.

"That won't be needed," he declared. "From now on there are going to be plenty of fish for both our peoples."

The Chief looked at him in surprise.

"Where they come from?" he demanded.

"Down the river," Bill answered. "That's why I said we should be grateful to the Wimpo . . . You see, the reason why the fish have been so scarce is that this pool was full of crocodiles. Naturally no fish could get past them as they usually do. But we've cleared the river of crocs. The fish will get past. In future there will be plenty of fish for all."

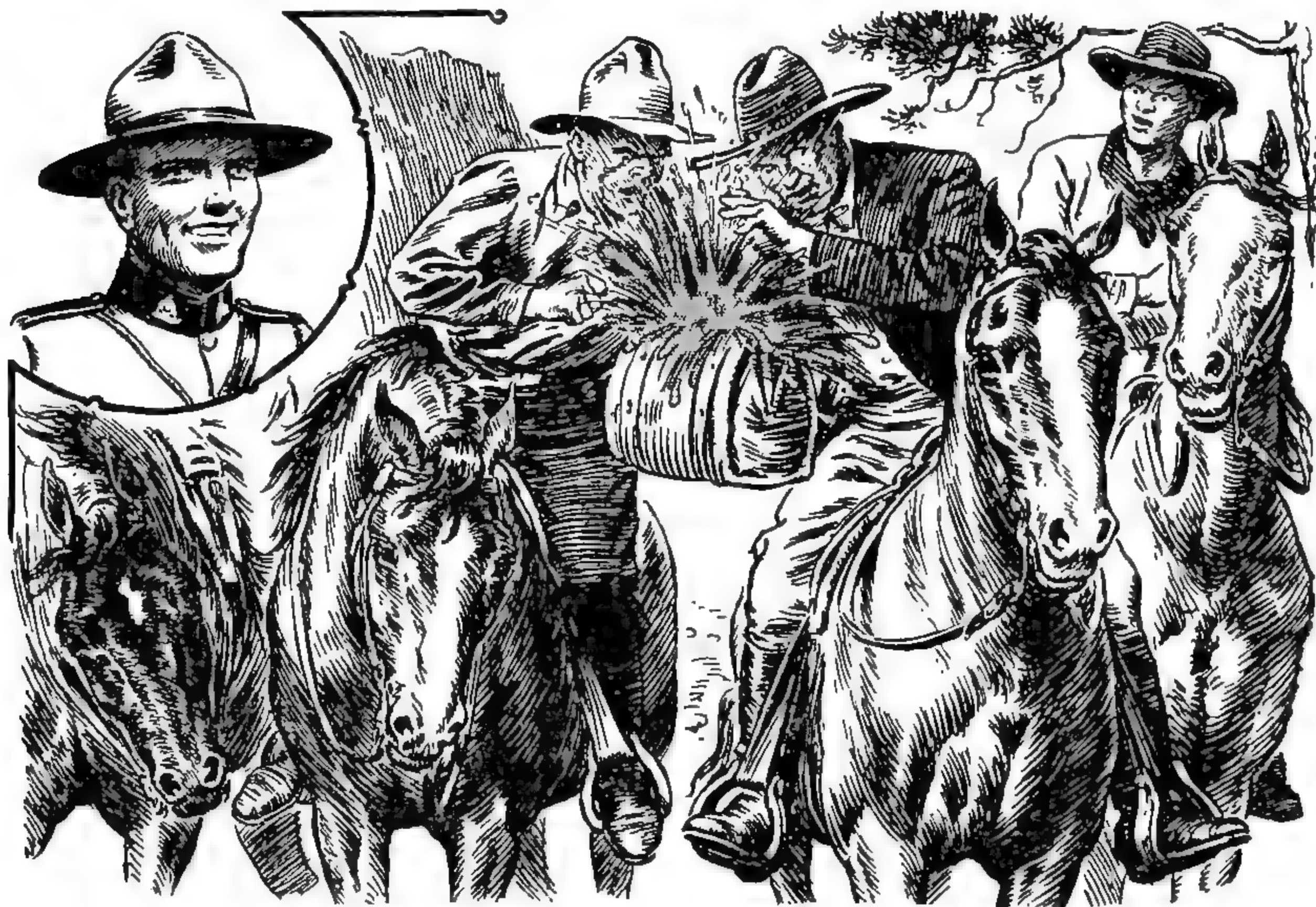
As he spoke the water burst into a shower of spray. A fish leaped high—and it was heading upstream!

Bill was right. The crocodiles were gone, and the fish scarcity was over.

THE END

The MOUNTIE WHO BECAME A "REDSKIN"!

BY
HAL
WILTON



AMBUSHED IN THE BACKWOODS

SERGEANT SAMSON of the Canadian Mounties stood outside the door of a tumbledown split-log cabin, watching the creek below. He could see no sign of life. But suddenly Butch, the husky dog sitting by his side, pricked up his ears and gave a sharp bark.

The Mountie was expecting a party of redskins to approach from the creek. It seemed that Butch's super-keen senses had detected them before Sergeant Samson was aware of them. Sure enough, a little later he heard the swish of dipping paddles, and a canoe shot into view.

Three young redskins sat in the canoe.

Sergeant Samson stooped and went into the cabin.

"The young braves have come for you, Wise Owl," he said gently.

An ancient and wrinkled Indian, his face and body decorated with paint marks of a tribal medicine man, sat patiently cross-legged on the floor of the hovel.

Many years ago, as the result of a quarrel, Wise

Owl had been driven from his tribe. Since then he had lived a hermit's life in his backwoods hut.

His only visitors were occasional redmen, and a few superstitious white trappers, hunters and prospectors anxious to make use of his supposed magical powers in curing sickness, foretelling the future, finding gold or casting a spell that would ensure good hunting.

Sergeant Samson had regularly kept a watchful eye on the old man. The Mountie reckoned that it was only a small part of his duty to go after crooks. He was responsible for the welfare of everyone in his territory around Wilderness Creek.

When it became plain to him that the aged medicine man was becoming too old to look after himself, he had gone to the redskin camp, given the young braves a straight talking-to, and told them it was time that ancient quarrels were forgotten.

Now they had come to take Wise Owl back to the tribe, where he could be properly cared for.

Sergeant Samson wrapped a blanket round the medicine man and helped him to his feet. The

The Escaped Convicts Thought They'd be Safe in the Backwoods, but - - !

braves had beached their birchbark canoe and were coming up towards the shack.

Wise Owl raised his hand palm out in a grave salute to the Mountie.

"The Redcoat has proved himself a true friend. Wise Owl is grateful. If ever Wise Owl can do him a service, the Redcoat has only to ask," the medicine man declared.

"I'll remember," promised Sergeant Samson.

The two braves assisted Wise Owl down to the canoe.

The Mountie swung himself into the saddle of his horse, Warpaint, and remained watching until the little vessel was out of sight. Then he whistled to Butch and cantered off in the direction of his headquarters, in the pioneer settlement of Wilderness Creek.

He had only a few miles more to go when Butch uttered a low growl and went racing ahead. The big husky had scented trouble.

Sergeant Samson spurred Warpaint. He heard a shout, followed by the crack of revolver shots. He topped a rise. On the trail below him he saw a horseman being hotly pursued by five others.

The fugitive clutched a leather satchel to his chest, and reeled in the saddle as if he had been hit.

Sergeant Samson, with a swift, skilled movement that came from long training, snatched the rifle from its scabbard at his saddle and brought it rapidly to his shoulder.

He could have downed at least one of the pursuers before they would have time to become aware of him.

But he remembered a maxim that had been drummed into him at the training barracks.

"Any fool with a gun can shoot a man dead. A Mountie's job is to bring 'em in alive."

He contented himself with firing a warning shot over the riders' heads. They at once reined in hard. Then one of them spotted him on the skyline and let out a yell.

"A redcoat! Scatter!"

They wheeled from the trail and rode pell-mell away among the trees.

Sergeant Samson galloped down towards their victim, while Butch raced through the scrub, uttering frustrated barks, trying to decide which of the five to follow.

Sergeant Samson whistled the husky back, and turned his attention to the victim of the attack, who was hugging a bullet wound in the shoulder.

The Mountie recognised the man at once. He was the manager of a neighbouring lumbercamp.

"What happened, Bryce?" Samson rapped.

"Sure glad to see you, Sarge," gasped Bryce.

"If you hadn't shown up, those jaspers would have nailed me for sure. I'd been into the bank at Wilderness Creek to draw the month's wages for my men.

These varmints must've known about it. They ambushed me—but they didn't get away with the money, thanks to you."

"Did you recognise any of them?" asked the Mountie.

"No. It all happened so quickly. But I'm sure of one thing. They weren't local men," declared Bryce. "Wait! There was one small thing I noticed. One of those polecats had no thumb on his right hand."

Sergeant Samson whistled softly.

"Five men, and one without a thumb. It ties up with a report I had from headquarters at Fort Dawson," he said. "Some weeks ago five convicts escaped from a prison in the United States. The ringleader was a thug called Four-Fingers Flynn. They crossed border. They stole food, clothes and horses, but so far as is known they've got no money. They'll be desperate until they lay their hands on some—and it looks as if they've invaded my territory to do it."

"Sure is a pity you didn't shoot a little straighter when you had 'em in your sights," grunted Bryce. "You could've thinned 'em out a bit."

Sergeant Samson's eyes gleamed.

"I'm not the law, Bryce. I'm only the servant of the law. There's a big difference," he pointed out. "My job is to arrest a man so that he can be tried according to the evidence. It's not for me to say whether he should live or die. The court decides whether he's innocent or guilty, not me."

"You'll be taking a big risk if you try to collar those five rattlesnakes alive. They're killers. It'd be safer if you shot 'em first and asked questions afterwards," warned Bryce.

"That's not the Mountie way. We give everyone a square deal—even crooks," Sergeant Samson said curtly. "But you're wounded. I must get you back to the police post to be patched up. Then I'll have to figure out a way to round up the Four-Fingers gang."

SERGEANT SAMSON PLANS A TRAP

SERGEANT SAMSON'S assistant, Constable Kelly, ran out of the police post at Wilderness Creek as the two riders approached. He had heard the excited barking of Butch, and had guessed that something was wrong.

The Sergeant swiftly explained the situation to his constable, and Bryce was helped inside.

Sergeant Samson shouted to Looki, his Eskimo cook, to bring hot water and bandages.

While Bryce's wound was being dressed, Looki went back to his kitchen to prepare a meal.

By the time Bryce had been made comfortable, Looki returned with fried caribou steaks and a large dish containing an unappetising mess of something that was a sickly green colour.

"What's this horrible-looking stuff?" cried Samson.

"Indian corn," replied the Eskimo.

"But look at the colour of it!" shuddered the sergeant. "You expect us to eat that? I wouldn't even give it to Butch."

"Sarge, many days you are telling me you are sick at the sight of corn for every meal," answered Looki. "But until our stores arrive, corn is all we've got. So I try making it different colour."

"What did you colour it with?" asked the sergeant suspiciously.

Looki went back into his kitchen, and returned with a large bottle half-filled with a bright green liquid.

"I find him in the office cupboard," he explained.

"Good heavens!" cried the Mountie. "Fancy mixing that stuff with our food! What a cook! It's a bottle of green dye that we found about a couple of years ago when we raided the hideout of a bunch of crooks who were trying to print forged banknotes. I'd better lock it in the safe."

He rose to his feet. Then, a thoughtful gleam in his eye he turned to Bryce, the bottle in his hand.

"I've just had an idea," he declared. "If I can hit on a way to make it work, I think this stuff can help us to round up the Four-Fingers gang!"

Bryce gazed at him in amazement.

"I don't get it," he protested. "There are five killers, desperate men, with hundreds of square miles of mountain and forest to hide in. How can that bottle help you catch them?"

Before Sergeant Samson could reply, Butch padded in. The dog was carrying an old, worn pair of Indian moccasins, which he laid at the Mountie's feet.

Sergeant Samson stooped to pick them up. Butch growled. The Mountie made a grab. Butch snatched the moccasins away and carried them to a corner of the room.

When the sergeant appeared to have lost interest, Butch brought the moccasins back, and they went through the same performance again.

Butch repeated his actions several times until, suddenly, the Mountie was too quick for him, and snatched the moccasins before the husky could whip them away.

Butch grabbed them in his powerful teeth. Then began a stubborn tug-of-war between the Mountie and the husky.

Bryce watched with growing impatience.

"Sergeant, how can you afford to waste your time playing games with a dog, when there's a bunch of killers loose?" he demanded at last.



Hardly had the noose encircled Sergeant Samson than a horseman thundered down the trail and snatched up the fallen satchel. It seemed that the Mountie had been completely outwitted.

"Butch and I play this game every day," the sergeant retorted. "He would be mighty upset if he brought his toys in and I took no notice of him. I wouldn't like him to be upset. He's my pal."

At the moment, using tremendous strength, Butch succeeded in recapturing the moccasins and scampering away with them to hide them until it was time for the next game.

All at once Sergeant Samson snapped his fingers.

"I've got it! Butch has given me the idea I needed. The moccasins! The moccasins and the bottle of green stuff. Between them they're going to catch the Four-Fingers Gang!"

"Sergeant, I just don't follow the way your thoughts work," Bryce protested. "If I were in your place, I would collect every able-bodied man in Wilderness Creek and organise a man-hunt to shoot these crooks on sight. But you say that a Mountie's job is to take them alive. Okay. But how? And what have moccasins to do with it?"

"Those moccasins were given to Butch, a long time ago, by a friend of mine—Wise Owl, the medicine man. D'you know him?"

"Sure. Everybody knows Wise Owl. He's that crazy old redskin hermit who lives in a shack along the creek," nodded Bryce.

Sergeant Samson smiled to himself. For the time being he wasn't telling anyone that Wise Owl no longer occupied the shack, but had returned to his tribe.

"I'll tell what we're going to do," he promised. "Do you think you'll be fit to ride back to the lumbercamp tomorrow?"

"Sure. Thanks to you I got off lightly, and I must return with the money for the men," nodded Bryce.

"Good! Now here's how it looks to me," went on Samson. "The gang can hide out in the backwoods for a while—but not for long. Winter is coming on, and they need money desperately. They can't make a move until they've got some. I figure they'll make another try to take that payroll away from you. I'd be mighty surprised if they're not keeping watch on this place to see when you leave!"

"Sure sounds an unhealthy prospect for me," gulped Bryce.

"But wait. Suppose, when you leave here, I leave too by another trail? What conclusions would the crooks draw from that?"

"That we're trying to outsmart them," said Bryce. "That my departure is a bluff, and that you're actually going to deliver the money."

"Right," nodded Sergeant Samson. "So we'll work a double bluff. We'll leave by different trails, but you'll carry the money. The crooks, unless I miss my guess, will come after me—and that'll suit me right down to the ground!"

THE following morning Sergeant Samson put his plan into operation.

He and Bryce rode together through Wilderness Creek. Both men carried leather satchels. Once clear of the settlement they reined in, talked for a few moments, and then parted company.

Bryce took the direct road to the lumbercamp. Sergeant Samson spurred Warpaint along a trail that led through timber-covered slopes.

The Mountie rode with every sense alert.

Time passed, and he began to grow anxious. He had banked on an attack being made on him by the Four-Finger gang.

Then, suddenly, it happened. He heard the tell-tale swish of a lariat, snaking down from the branches overhead as he cantered beneath the trees.

A noose tightened round him, and Samson was yanked from the saddle. Warpaint reared, and the satchel went flying.

The Mountie rolled helplessly on the ground. A horseman came thundering down the trail. Bending low, he scooped up the bulging satchel and let out a triumphant yell.

"All right, boys! I got it!"

He wheeled his horse and galloped away out of sight.

Sergeant Samson struggled to free himself from the noose. He rolled over and sat up. He could hear other riders making off through the trees. The gang had staged their hold-up cleverly. It was impossible for Sergeant Samson to identify them. Except for a fleeting glimpse of the one man who had snatched the satchel, he hadn't had a sight of any of them.

But this didn't worry the Mountie. He whistled to Warpaint, remounted, and rode steadily until he reached the shack by the creek where Wise Owl had lived.

He went inside, carrying his saddle bag.

He took off his uniform and his underclothes, and in their place he donned a pair of buckskin trousers and Butch's moccasins which he took from the saddle bag. Then he carefully applied brown stain to his arms, face and body, and added tribal marks with paint.

The paint marks on his face helped to make him look old and haggard.

He also dusted his hair with white powder.

He next stuffed his own belongings back into the saddle bag, which he hung on Warpaint's flank.

Then he gave the horse a sharp slap.

"Home, Warpaint!" he instructed.

The well-trained horse understood and cantered off at once to find its own way back to the police post.

Sergeant Samson, left alone, busied himself

building a camp fire, and then sat down in the doorway of the shack.

The Mountie's strategy was simple. To attempt to search the whole vast wilderness for the hide-out of five men was an almost impossible task for himself and Constable Kelly.

So, instead of going after the crooks, he had decided to make them come to him. It might take a little time, but he was sure they would come in the end.

THE SURPRISE-PACKET ROUND-UP

MEANWHILE, the five crooks, after splitting up in their headlong dash through the woods, to baffle any possible pursuit, had met again in a dry gully several miles from the scene of the hold-up.

Four-Fingers Flynn clutched the bulging satchel and grinned wolfishly at his companions.

"Fancy that dumb backwoods policeman thinking we'd fall for such a simple trick," he grinned. "Guess he expected us to chase after Bryce while he delivered the money to the lumbercamp. Boys, we're in the clear. With all this dough we can head for some big city and live like lords. We'll never be traced."

"Open up the satchel and let's see how much we've got," urged one of the men greedily.

The others kned their horses in closer while Four-Fingers fumbled with the clasp. Suddenly it sprang open.

Woomf!

There was a sharp, muffled explosion, and Four-Fingers caught a momentary glimpse of a tightly-expanded bladder inside the satchel. Then it burst, and a heavy spray of green mist shot out and formed a cloud round Four-Fingers' head.

Four-Fingers and the men on either side of him were drenched before they realised what had happened. The two on the outside of the group escaped.

Four-Fingers uttered a spluttering yell.

"A trick! A tom-fool schoolboy booby trap!" he yelled, pawing feverishly inside the satchel. "There's no money in here. Not a cent. We've been outsmarted by Sergeant Samson!"

One of the unmarked men was staring, eyes bulging.

"Your faces! They've turned green!" he gasped.

Seething with rage, Four-Fingers dropped from his saddle and hurried along the gully to a pool. He stooped and began to wash feverishly. After about five minutes he stared at his reflection in the water.

"The doggone stuff won't wash off!" he cried wildly.

He swung himself into the saddle again.

"Back to the hide-out!" he snapped. "The Mounties for miles around will be keeping watch for men with green faces. Until we can get cleaned up we daren't move. That redcoat has branded us!"

They rode swiftly by little-known trails to a cave which they had made their headquarters.

An hour later Four-Fingers was as green as ever. No amount of washing would remove the dye. He had even tried scrubbing his face with handfuls of wet sand. But apart from making his cheeks too painfully sore to touch, he had achieved nothing.

His eyes blazed with fury.

"You realise what this means?" he demanded thickly. "Until we can get rid of this green dye we daren't move from here. We're stuck, with no place we can go."

He dug his hand into his pocket and brought out some small coins.

"How much money have we got between us?" he demanded.

The gang pooled their meagre supply of cash. It came to just over five dollars.

Four-Fingers turned to one of the two men who had not been marked.

"Take this dough. Ride down to the store at Wilderness Creek. Buy soap, pumice, turpentine, paint-remover—anything that might shift this doggone stuff," he ordered. "We've just got to find some way of getting rid of it!"

Back at the police H.Q., Sergeant Samson's pals were playing their part!

Looki, the Eskimo cook at the Mountie post, walked briskly into the Wilderness Creek store with a large sheaf of police notices calling on everyone to watch out for a gang of green-faced men, and, if seen to report their whereabouts at once.

An interested crowd gathered to read the notice when the Eskimo pinned it up, and one and all roared with laughter.

"I'd sure hate to be one of those green-faced guys if I had the sergeant on my trail," declared an amused trapper.

"Me, I t'ink I would go and see Wise Owl, the medicine man," remarked Looki blandly. "Wise Owl very clever. He cure me when I have the scarlet rash."

He left the crowd hotly discussing the powers of Wise Owl, some declaring that he was a wonder-worker, others that his so-called powers were due to nothing but redskin superstition.

Looki carried on to the bank, and then to the Wilderness Creek hotel, and at each one he dropped his casual hint about Wise Owl and his mysterious powers.

Some time later, back at the gang's hide-out, Four-Fingers sprang eagerly to his feet as he heard his messenger returning.

The man was carrying one of the posters, which he had ripped off a tree.

"Constable Kelly is riding all round the district putting up these things, and the Eskimo is shoving them on every public building in the Creek," he growled. "You'd better read it, Four-Fingers."

Four-Fingers trembled with rage as he scanned the poster.

"I'd like to get my hands round that Mountie's neck!" he rasped. "This sinks us. We daren't move an inch from hiding unless we can get rid of this green muck. The whole North-West will be on the look-out for us!"

Feverishly he grabbed the cleaning materials that his messenger had brought back from the store. Water was heated until it was almost too hot to bear, then the three marked men went to work on themselves in desperation, scraping, scrubbing and scouring.

Nothing had any effect. At the end of another hour they were weary, bad-tempered, and still as green as ever.

"What are we gonna do?" gritted Four-Fingers wildly.

"Say, I just remembered," exclaimed the messenger. "Down at the Creek they wuz talking about some old Injun hermit called Wise Owl.

Figured he might know how to clean you up."

Four-Fingers turned on him with blazing eyes.

"Why didn't you say so before?" he stormed.

At any other time he would have scoffed at the idea of going to a medicine man. But now he was ready to clutch at any chance, and the suggestion appeared to offer a ray of hope.

He turned to the two unmarked men.

"Ride down and get him. Bring him up here. Wise Owl's just got to do something. He's our last hope."

Disguised as Wise Owl, Sergeant Samson was sitting cross-legged in front of the shack and gazing at his smouldering camp fire.

Hearing the two riders approaching, he threw a lot of green branches on the fire.

By the time the riders came in sight a huge column of smoke was rising above the shack.

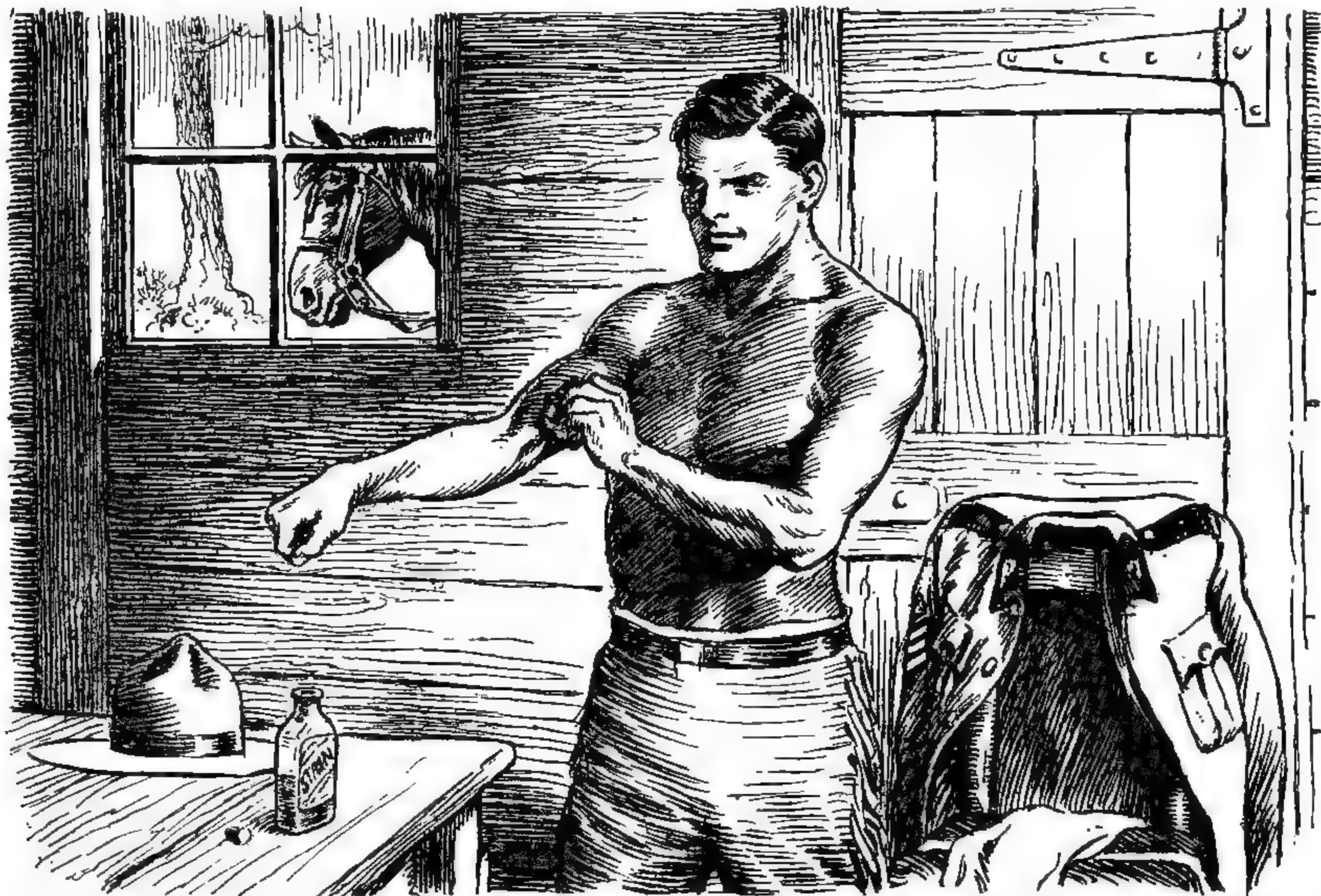
"Are you the Injun they call Wise Owl?" growled one of the riders.

"What if I am, white man?" asked Sergeant Samson in a quaky voice.

"On your feet, you old varmint. You're coming with us."

"Wise Owl takes orders from no man," the Mountie replied.

By now the crook had slipped a lariat from his



Carefully Sergeant Samson applied the stain to his arms, face and body. Would he succeed in making the crooks think that he was a Red Indian?

saddle. Swiftly he cast a noose over the disguised Mountie.

"Walk or be dragged. Take your choice," the crook sneered.

As Sergeant Samson staggered to his feet, the crooks wheeled their horses and set off at a canter.

The disguised Mountie, dragged at the end of the rope, was compelled to follow at a stumbling run.

It was a painful experience. The riders were in no mood to be careful. Several times Sergeant Samson was hauled helplessly through patches of rough scrub. Several times he fell and was dragged like a sack before he could regain his feet.

He was bleeding, battered and breathless by the time they reached the cave.

Four-Fingers looked him over, and a savage grin contorted his green face.

"Guess you've already learnt that we play rough, Injun," he rasped. "But what's happened to you so far is nothing to what we'll do to you unless you help us. Medicine man, get rid of these green faces!"

"I cannot," answered the Mountie blandly.

"You can, you varmint, and you will!" bel-lowed Four-Fingers, almost beside himself.

"No," said the disguised Mountie stubbornly.

Fear and rage combined to make Four-Fingers lose his temper. He clenched his fist and lashed out with a savage punch.

The sergeant, his arms still held to his sides by the lariat, was unable to defend himself. The fist smashed into his face, and he went down like a log on the floor of the cave.

Four-Fingers glowered at him.

"Get up," he yelled, "and shift this green dye!"

The sergeant remained motionless. Four-Fingers grabbed a bucket of the soapy water with which he had tried in vain to remove the green dye from his face.

Furiously he emptied the bucket over the sergeant.

Then his expression froze. For the paint on the Mountie's face had run, and white powder had washed out of his hair!

"This ain't no Injun!" rasped the crook. "It's the Mountie!"

The other four hauled Sergeant Samson to his feet, while Four-Fingers drew his gun and levelled it.

"I've got a lotta scores to pay off," he said hoarsely. "I'm gonna shoot you, and then throw yuh to the wolves."

"I'd put that gun down if I were you," advised Sergeant Samson grimly. "Do you think I'd be crazy enough to let your men bring me here alone?"

Suppose my constable is just outside, covering you with a rifle?"

For a moment the crook seemed uneasy. Then his eyes gleamed with cunning.

"It's an old trick, Mountie, and it won't work with me. You want me to look round, so you can jump me and grab this gun. You're bluffing. There's nobody there."

It was only partly true. If the sergeant's plan had gone as he intended, Constable Kelly was already on his way, but he hadn't arrived yet. Sergeant Samson had to play for time.

"The location of Wise Owl's shack can be seen from the police post," said the Mountie. "Kelly has been keeping it under observation through glasses. When your men arrived, I threw fresh stuff on the camp fire. The column of smoke was a signal to Kelly that you had swallowed the bait, and that was time for him to come fast."

"But by the time he reached the shack there was no sign of you," jeered Four-Fingers. "He'll never find this place."

"Butch, my husky, can follow a trail," warned the sergeant. He nodded down at his feet. "See these moccasins I'm wearing? They belonged to Wise Owl. He gave them to Butch, who plays with them every day. If there's one scent he can follow for miles, it's the scent of these moccasins."

Sneering, the crook raised the gun.

"Look out! Behind you!" shouted the sergeant. This time he wasn't bluffing.

A savage howl echoed through the cave. Then Butch came hurtling in among the crooks and flung himself on Four-Fingers, teeth bared, jaws snapping.

The green-faced crook uttered a yell as Sergeant Samson leapt at him, dragging his arms from the lariat and grabbing the gun.

Butch hit the crook like a battering ram, knocked him to the floor, and landed on his chest.

Samson flourished the gun at the rest of the gang.

"Don't move, anyone. See who's outside!" he exclaimed.

Men with levelled rifles ringed the entrance to the cave. Constable Kelly was there, and Looki, Bryce, and a bunch of volunteers from the Creek.

Sergeant Samson called Butch off his victim, who was whimpering with fright. Then he lined his captives up against the wall of the cave.

Constable Kelly grimly linked them wrist to wrist with handcuffs.

"Start walking to the police post," the sergeant commanded grimly.

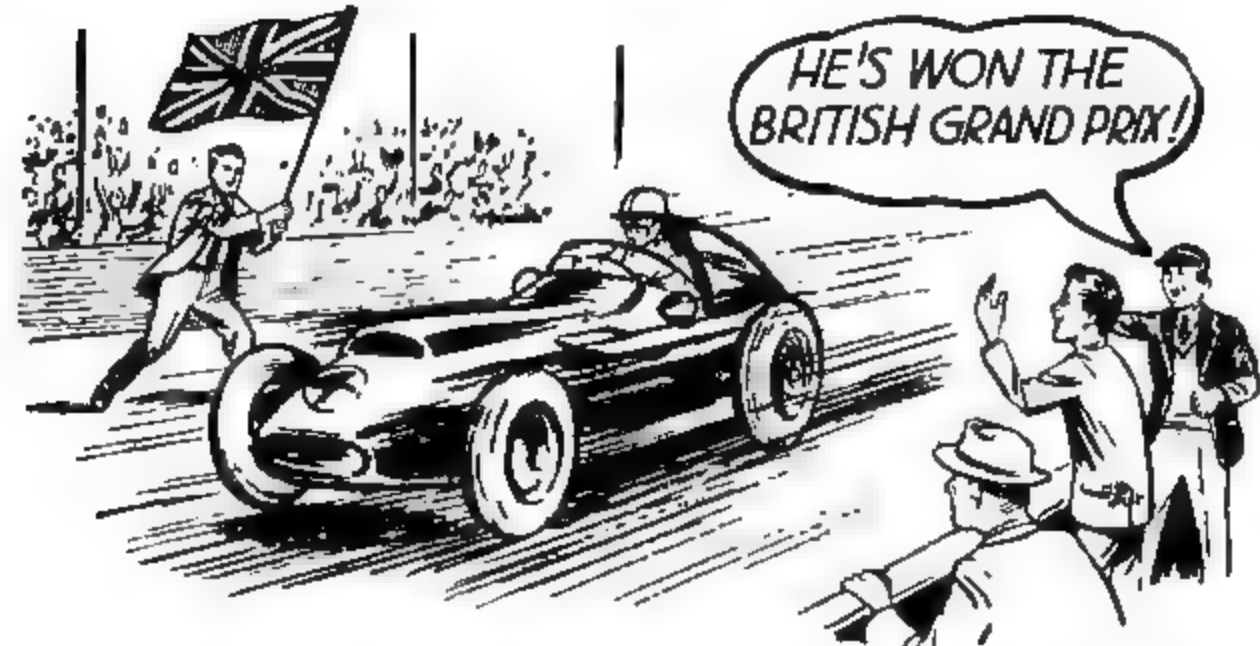
Then he turned and chuckled to Bryce.

"Like I told you, we Mounties believe in bringing 'em in alive!"

THE END

WORLD-WIDE QUIZ

Have a Shot at the Answers—Then Check Them with the Correct Ones on Page 41



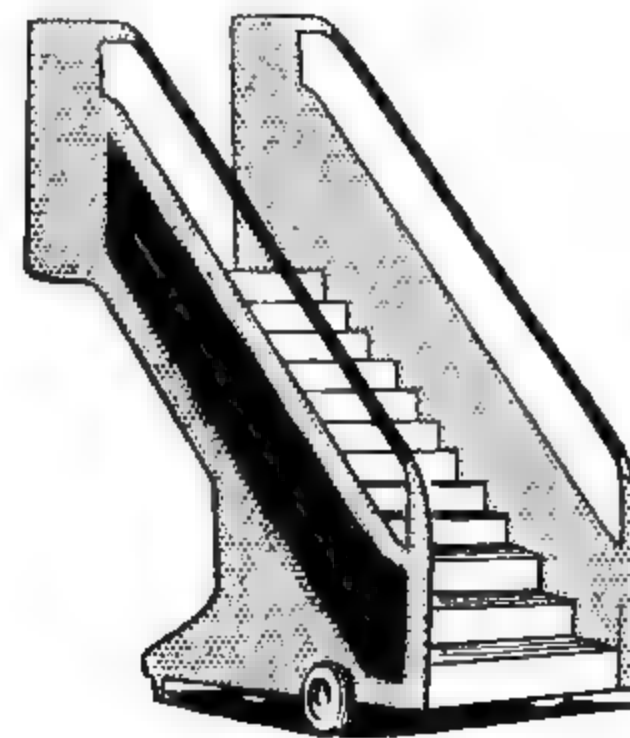
2. SPOT THE ARTIST'S DELIBERATE MISTAKE ?



4. WHAT IS THIS TYPE OF JUG CALLED ?



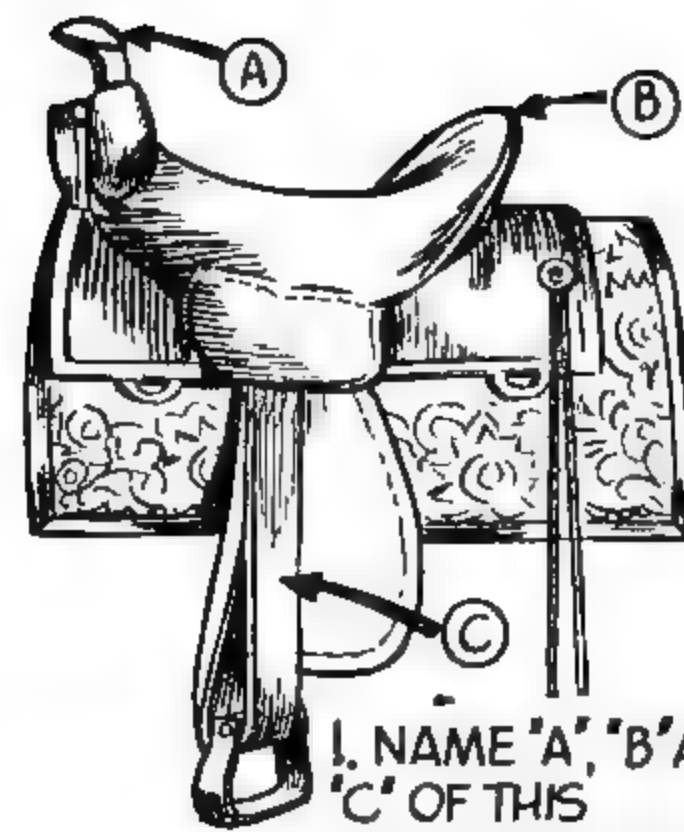
5. IS HE A SHEIK, A PASHA OR A MANDARIN ?



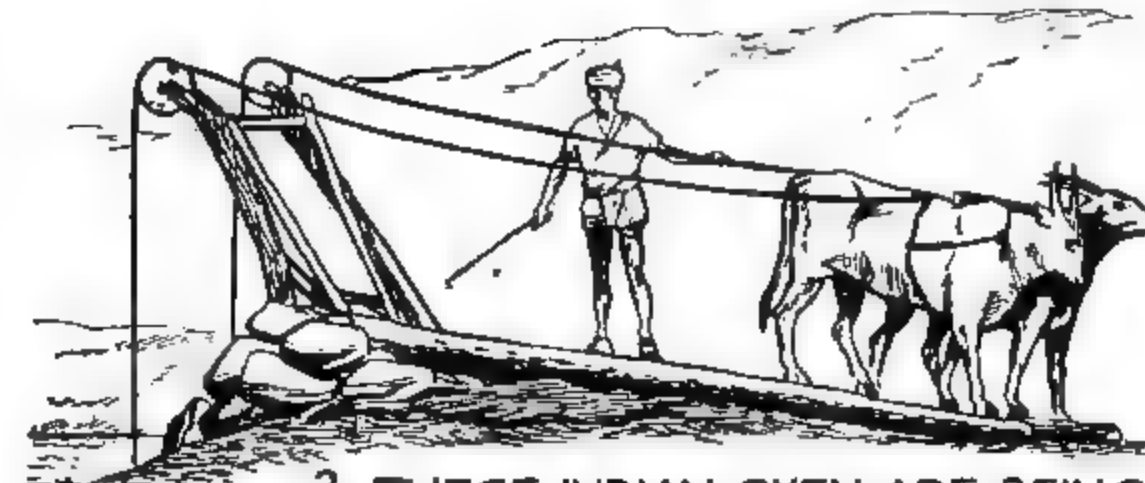
6. WHERE WOULD YOU SEE THIS ?



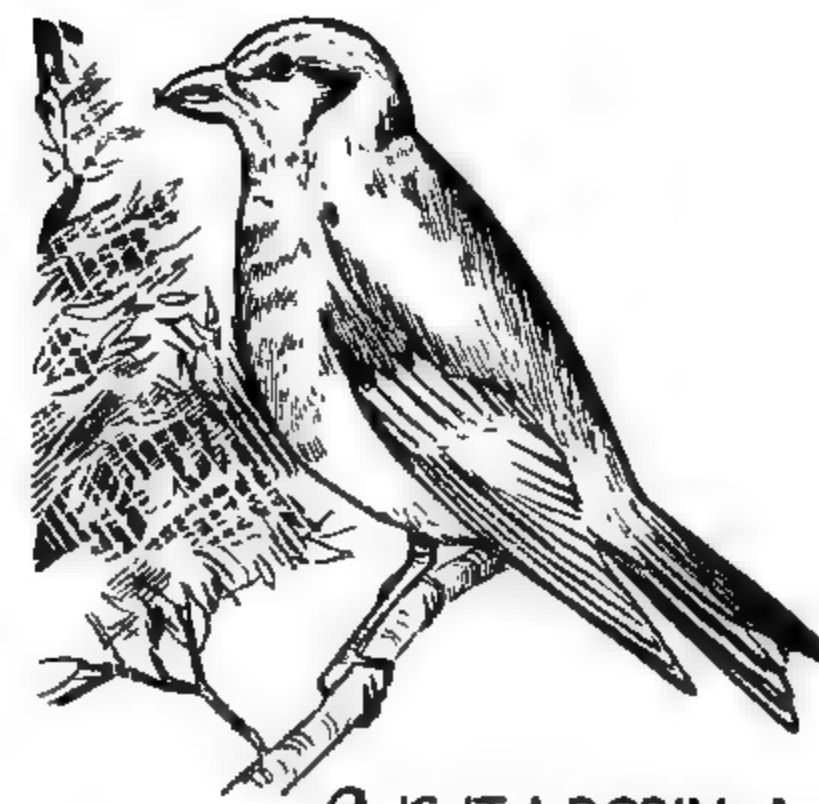
8. WHAT INSTRUMENT IS THE SIAMESE PLAYING ?



1. NAME 'A', 'B' AND 'C' OF THIS COWBOY SADDLE



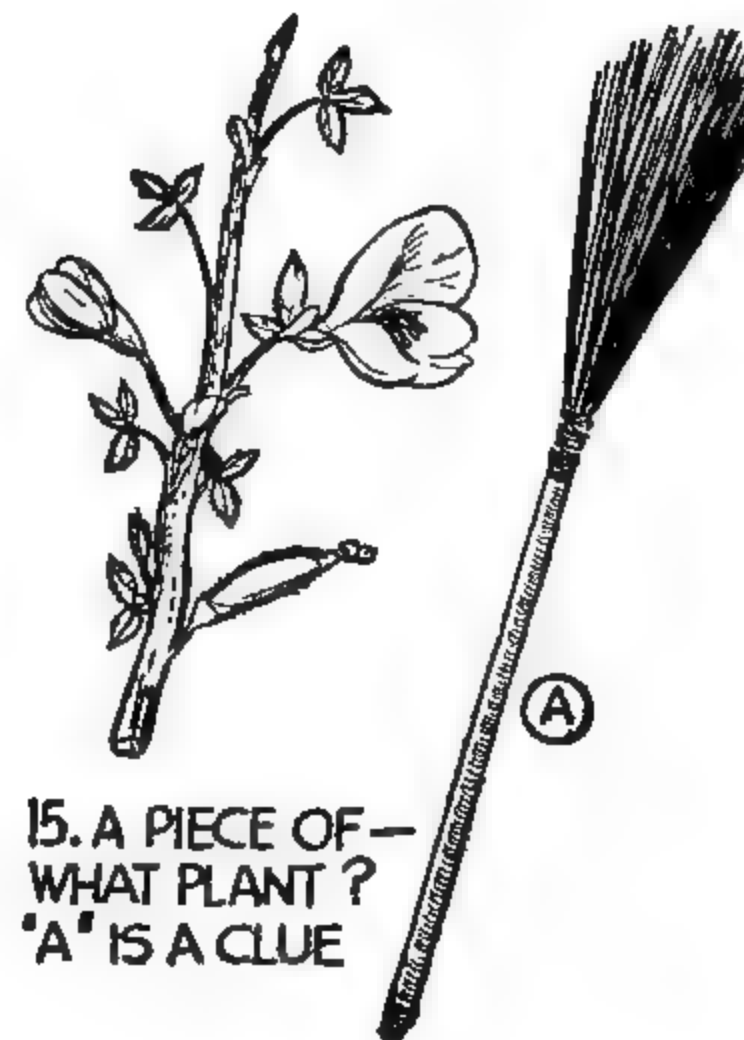
3. THESE INDIAN OXEN ARE BEING USED TO DO — WHAT ?



9. IS IT A ROBIN, A CANARY, OR A CROSSBILL ?



12. A STREET SCENE IN — WHICH COUNTRY ?



15. A PIECE OF — WHAT PLANT ? 'A' IS A CLUE



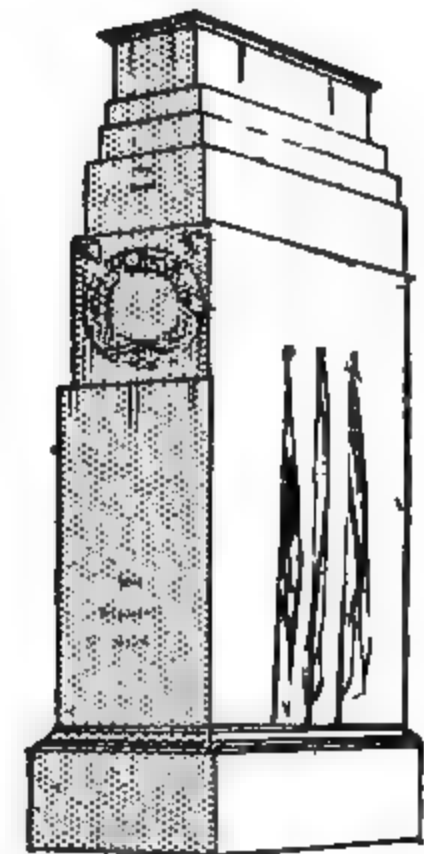
10. WHO WEAR THIS COSTUME ?



11. ANYTHING WRONG ?



13. KNOW HIS JOB ?



14. A WELL-KNOWN LONDON LANDMARK. WHICH ?



16. IS THE BOY CORRECT ?



17. WHICH FOREST IN ENGLAND DOES THIS SUGGEST ?

**STARRING
CAPT.
CONDOR**

MUTINY *on the*

SPACE-SHIP PALOMAR

BY
**FRANK S.
PEPPER**

IT WAS THE YEAR 3006, AND CAPTAIN CONDOR, OF THE SPACE PATROL, WAS TRAVELLING TO EARTH FOR A SPELL OF WELL EARNED LEAVE. HE HAD ACCEPTED A PASSAGE HOME ON A TANKER CARRYING THOUSANDS OF TONS OF PETROLEEN UNDER HIGH PRESSURE. PETROLEEN WAS A FUEL OIL MANY TIMES MORE INFLAMMABLE THAN OLD-FASHIONED PETROL. IT WAS PUMPED FROM VAST UNDERGROUND LAKES ON THE PLANET PLUTO, AND FERRIED IN SUPER-TANKERS TO EARTH, WHOSE OWN OIL WELLS HAD LONG SINCE BEEN DRAINED DRY

ACCOMPANYING CONDOR WERE TWO SPACE CADETS - JASON BROWN AND MIKE HILL. THEY HAD JUST FINISHED AN EXCELLENT DINNER IN THE WARD ROOM



WELL, LADS, IT MAKES A CHANGE TO BE OFF DUTY AND TO BE SERVED WITH A MEAL LIKE THAT. THESE TANKER BOYS ALWAYS GET FIRST CLASS GRUB. BUT I GUESS, THEY DESERVE IT. THEIRS CAN BE A DANGEROUS JOB IF THINGS GO WRONG

CONDOR SAT BACK TO ENJOY AN AFTER-DINNER CIGARETTE, BUT -



DARN IT! UNLESS YOU LADS CARRY MATCHES, I'M DONE OUT OF A SMOKE. MY LIGHTER HAS RUN DRY

SORRY, CAPTAIN - WE CAN'T HELP. BUT WHY WORRY? THE SHIP'S LOADED WITH UMPTEEN TONS OF FUEL SURELY THE CARGO MASTER WOULD GIVE YOU A LITTLE?

HE WOULDN'T GIVE ME A SINGLE DROP! IT'S MORE THAN HE DARE DO. KNOW WHY? THAT STUFF IS SO EXPLOSIVE THAT IT'S STRICTLY FORBIDDEN TO TOUCH THE CONTAINERS DURING A VOYAGE. IF THE FUMES LEAKED INTO THE SHIP, A SINGLE SPARK MIGHT SEND US OFF LIKE A BOMB



AT THAT MOMENT A STEWARD BURST BREATHLESSLY INTO THE WARD ROOM



CAPTAIN CONDOR! COMMANDER'S COMPLIMENTS, AND CAN YOU PLEASE COME UP TO THE BRIDGE AT ONCE? IT'S MOST URGENT

THE COMMANDER GREETED CONDOR WITH APOLOGIES AS THE CAPTAIN, FOLLOWED BY JASON AND MIKE RUSHED UP TO THE BRIDGE



SORRY TO BREAK IN ON YOUR LEAVE - BUT WE'VE JUST SIGHTED A MIGHTY QUEER OBJECT. LOOKS LIKE A JOB FOR THE SPACE PATROL!

BEFORE CONDOR COULD EXAMINE THE SINISTER SHAPE ON THE TELE-SCREEN, IT BEGAN TO SLIDE FROM VIEW

IT SEEMS TO BE DRIFTING AWAY TO OUR REAR. CAN'T WE TRACK IT ON ANOTHER SCREEN?

I'M AFRAID NOT. OUR STERN SCANNERS HAVE BEEN OUT OF ACTION ALL DAY. WE SHAN'T BE ABLE TO SEE ANYTHING BEHIND US UNTIL THEY'VE BEEN REPAIRED

THAT OBJECT IS TOO IMPORTANT TO IGNORE. IT'S NOT FAR AWAY, SO WE'LL TAKE ONE OF THE SHIP'S BOATS AND INVESTIGATE

SOON CONDOR AND THE CADETS WERE SPEEDING TOWARDS THE MYSTERIOUS OBJECT

GOSH, MIKE, THIS IS EXCITING. I HAVEN'T A CLUE AS TO WHAT IT'LL TURN OUT TO BE!

I WONDER WHERE IT'S COME FROM, AND HOW IT CAME TO BE DRIFTING IN SPACE, MILLIONS OF MILES FROM ANYWHERE?

THE BOAT DREW NEARER, AND THEN --

SUFFERING COMETS! IT'S-IT'S A MAN ADRIFT IN A SPACE-SUIT. HOW IN THE NAME OF THUNDER DID HE GET HERE?

THE BEWILDERED PALS SWIFTLY HAULED THE DRIFTING FIGURE ABOARD

WE'VE RUN ACROSS A REAL SPACE MYSTERY HERE

WE MUST RUSH HIM BACK TO THE TANKER, THEN MAYBE WE'LL LEARN HOW HE HAPPENS TO BE FLOATING AROUND ON HIS OWN

IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE THE MYSTERIOUS SPACE-CASTAWAY WAS BEING EXAMINED BY THE TANKER'S DOCTOR

HE'S STILL ALIVE - BUT HE'LL BE UNCONSCIOUS FOR HOURS. DON'T ASK ME WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM. FRANKLY, I HAVEN'T THE FAINTEST IDEA!

CONDOR PEERED AT THE CLOTHES TAKEN FROM THE UNKNOWN SPACE-DRIFTER

ACCORDING TO HIS UNIFORM HE'S A TECHNICIAN FROM ASTEROID WARNING STATION 9 ANY REPORTS OF TROUBLE FROM THERE?

NONE. A.W.S. 9 IS TRANSMITTING NORMAL RADAR SIGNALS

STATION 9 WAS A KIND OF SPACE LIGHTHOUSE TO HELP SHIPS NAVIGATE THE DANGEROUS ZONE BETWEEN JUPITER AND MARS

CONDOR REALISED THAT THE ANSWER TO THE MYSTERY MUST LIE ON THE ASTEROID, SO HE SET OUT FOR IT AT ONCE WITH JASON AND MIKE

IF THE MAN CAME FROM THE WARNING STATION, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO LEARN SOMETHING ABOUT HIM THERE

JASON GAVE A PUZZLED FROWN AS THE LIGHTHOUSE CAME IN SIGHT AND CONDOR PREPARED TO TOUCH DOWN

THEY PASSED THROUGH THE STATION'S AIR-LOCK, AND WERE GREETED BY A MAN IN A CHIEF OFFICER'S UNIFORM

YOU SAY YOU ACTUALLY FOUND HIM? INCREDIBLE! HE HAD AN ACCIDENT WITH A REPULSER PISTOL. GRAVITY HERE IS ALMOST NIL, AND HE WAS BLOWN OFF THE ASTEROID. IT SEEMED POINTLESS TO BROADCAST AN ALARM—CHANCES WERE MILLIONS TO ONE AGAINST HIM EVER BEING FOUND

THERE'S THE STATION—AND EVERYTHING LOOKS NORMAL TO ME. THIS JUST DOESN'T MAKE SENSE

SO IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT, EH? H'M!

CONDOR WAS FAR FROM SATISFIED. HE BEGAN A TOUR OF THE STATION, AND SUDDENLY, THROUGH A GLASSITE WALL, HE SAW A DAMAGED SPACE-SHIP

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT TOOK CAPTAIN CONDOR AND THE CADETS COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE. ARMED MEN APPEARED AS IF FROM NOWHERE AND SURROUNDED THEM!

YOU'VE SEEN TOO MUCH, CONDOR. THAT'S JUST TOO BAD—FOR YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS!

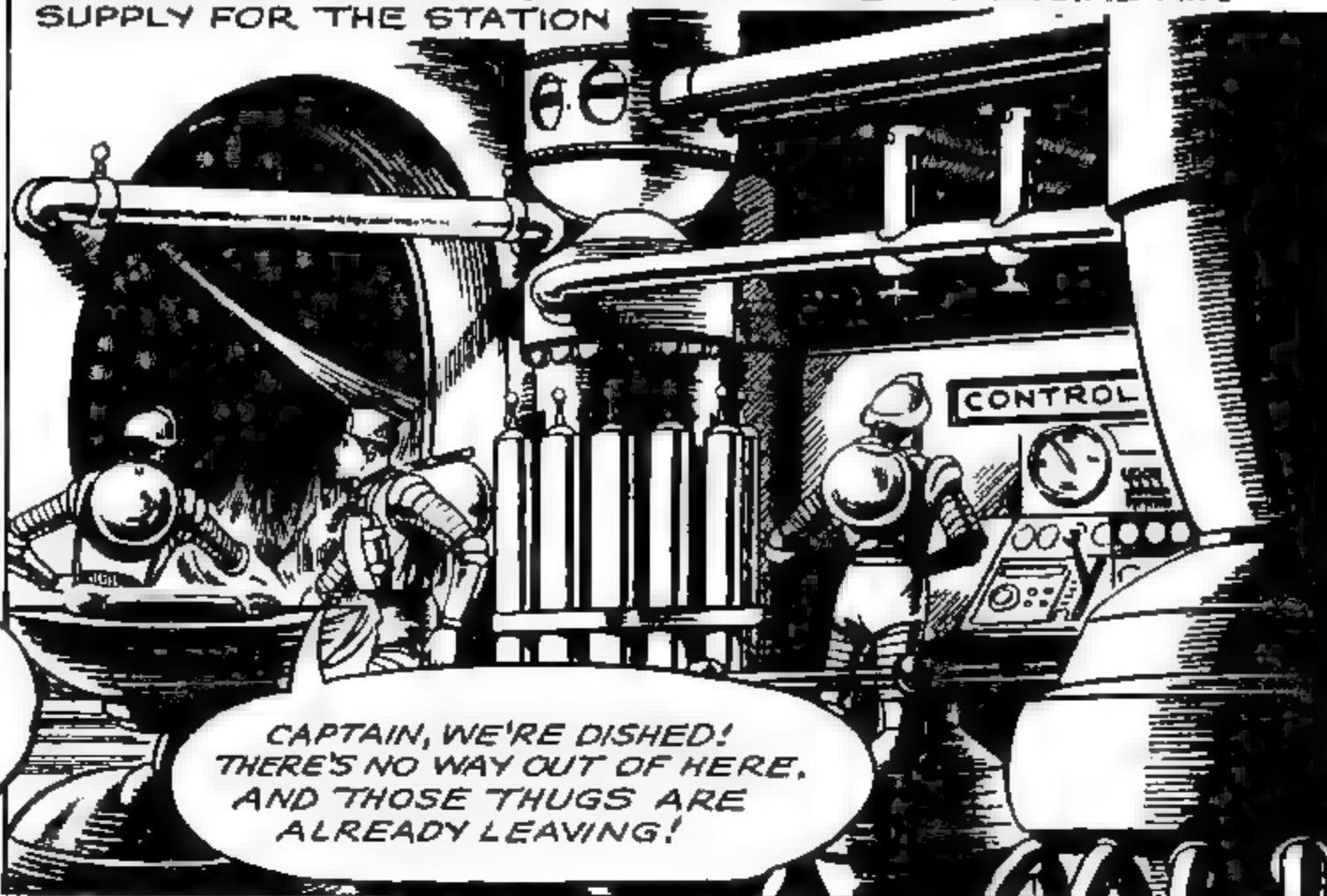
WHY, I RECOGNISE HER. SHE'S THE PALOMAR! SHE VANISHED WHEN HER CREW MUTINIED AND TURNED PIRATE. WHAT'S SHE DOING HERE?

SO YOU'RE NOT THE REAL CHIEF OFFICER. YOU'RE A PHONEY—A CROOK WEARING HIS UNIFORM. YOU AND THESE OTHER THUGS ARE THE MUTINOUS CREW OF THE PALOMAR... P'RAPS YOU'LL TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON?



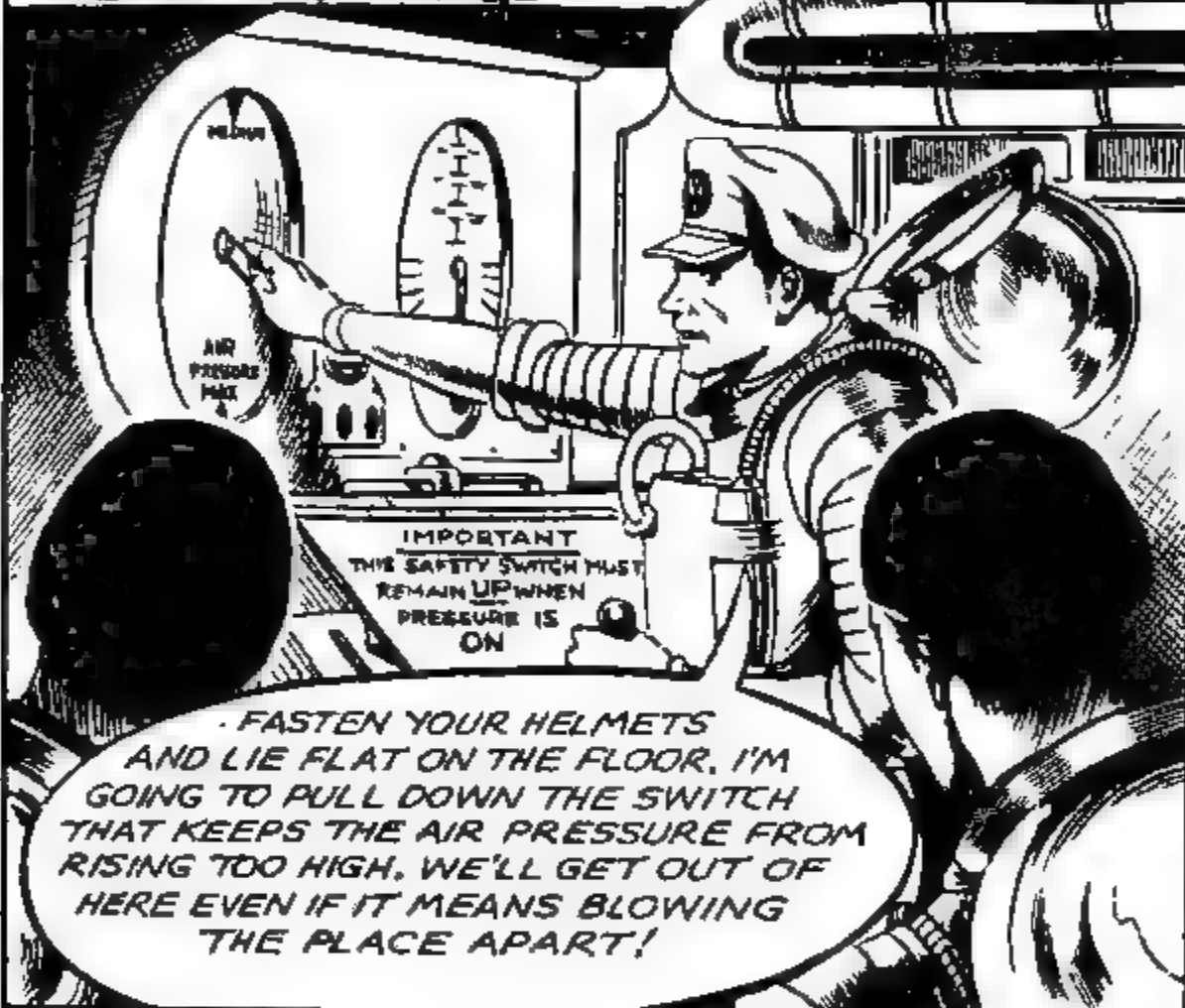
CERTAINLY—FOR YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. WE MADE A FORCED LANDING HERE, WE ROUNDED UP MOST OF THE STATION CREW, BUT ONE BLEW HIMSELF OFF INTO SPACE. WE INTENDED TO STAY AND REPAIR OUR SHIP. NOW I'VE HAD A BETTER IDEA. WE'LL BORROW YOUR BOAT AND CAPTURE THE TANKER!

CONDOR AND THE CADETS WERE IMPRISONED IN A SMALL COMPARTMENT WHICH GENERATED THE ARTIFICIAL AIR SUPPLY FOR THE STATION



CAPTAIN, WE'RE DISHED! THERE'S NO WAY OUT OF HERE, AND THOSE THUGS ARE ALREADY LEAVING!

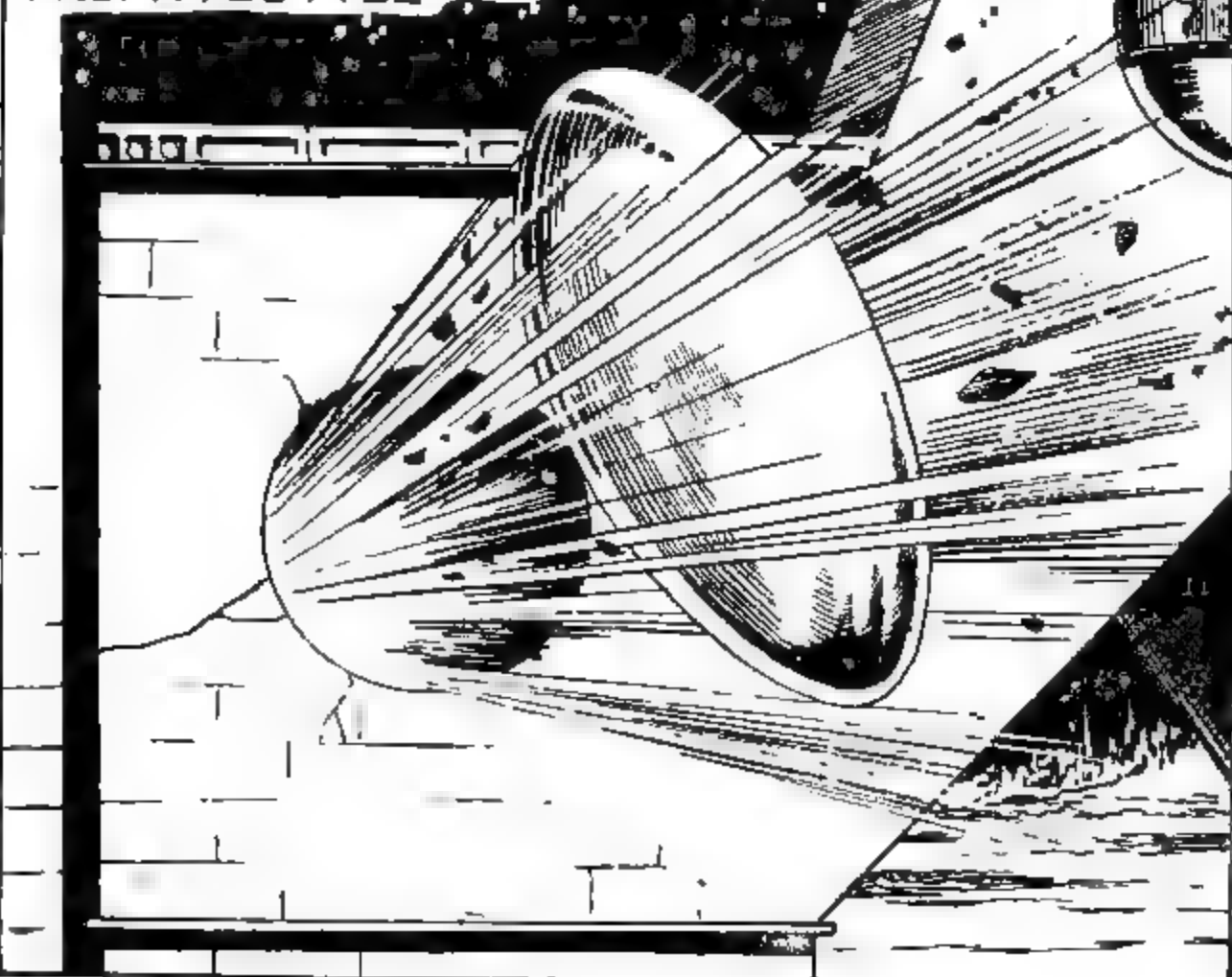
THE FAMOUS SPACE-MAN, HOWEVER, SWIFTLY THOUGHT UP AN ESCAPE PLAN. HE SPRANG TO THE CONTROL PANEL



ALARM BELLS RANG AND WARNING LIGHTS FLASHED AS POWERFUL PUMPS BUILT UP THE AIR PRESSURE TO A POINT WHERE THE PALS WOULD HAVE BEEN CRUSHED HAD THEY NOT BEEN WEARING SPACE-SUITS



ALL AT ONCE THERE WAS A ROAR, AND THE GLASSITE WINDOW BLEW OUT LIKE A CORK FROM A BOTTLE



NEXT MOMENT A WHIRLWIND OF ESCAPING AIR SWEEPED THE PALS TO THE OPEN PORTHOLE WHERE THEY HUNG ON FOR DEAR LIFE



WHEN THE RUSH OF AIR HAD SUBSIDED, CONDOR LOOKED TOWARDS THE PALOMAR WITH A GLEAM IN HIS EYE

SHE'S DAMAGED--BUT WE'LL HAVE TO RISK USING HER. THERE'S NO OTHER WAY OF GETTING AFTER THOSE CROOKS AND STOPPING THEM GETTING AWAY WITH THE TANKER

MEANWHILE, THE GANG HAD REACHED THE TANKER--AND WERE HAILED BY AN UNSUSPECTING SPACE-MAN IN THE AIR-LOCK

WHAT NEWS FROM THE ASTEROID, CAPTAIN CONDOR?

THE SPACE-MAN RECEIVED A STUNNING SHOCK AS THE CROOKS ALIGHTED AND A GUN MUZZLE WAS THRUST AGAINST HIS HELMET

WHAT THE--? YOU'RE NOT CONDOR! WHO--?

BUTTON UP. THIS IS A SNATCH

COME ON. MOVE FAST. TAKE THE BRIDGE AND ENGINE ROOM FIRST. IF ANYONE RESISTS, SHOOT TO KILL

IT WAS SOME MINUTES LATER THAT CONDOR, JASON AND MIKE MANAGED TO COAX THE PALOMAR INTO SPACE. THEY WATCHED THE TELE-SCREEN EAGERLY, AND ALL AT ONCE--

LOOK, SIR. THE CROOKS HAVE CAPTURED THE TANKER. THEY'RE CASTING THE CREW ADrift. DOES THAT MEAN WE'RE TOO LATE?

NOT LIKELY!

CONDOR WAITED FOR THE STOLEN SHIP TO BLAST OFF INTO SPACE. THEN HE MADE RADIO CONTACT WITH THE DRIFTING BOATS

CONDOR TO TANKER COMMANDER. TAKE YOUR PARTY TO STATION 9 AND WAIT FOR ME THERE

MESSAGE RECEIVED AND UNDERSTOOD

DARINGLY CONDOR ACCELERATED THE PALOMAR UNTIL ITS JETS GLOWED WHITE HOT. AT ALL COST HE WAS DETERMINED TO OVERTAKE THE STOLEN TANKER

CAPTAIN! SURELY THEY MUST HAVE SEEN US THROUGH THEIR REAR SCANNERS. YET THEY HAVEN'T INCREASED SPEED

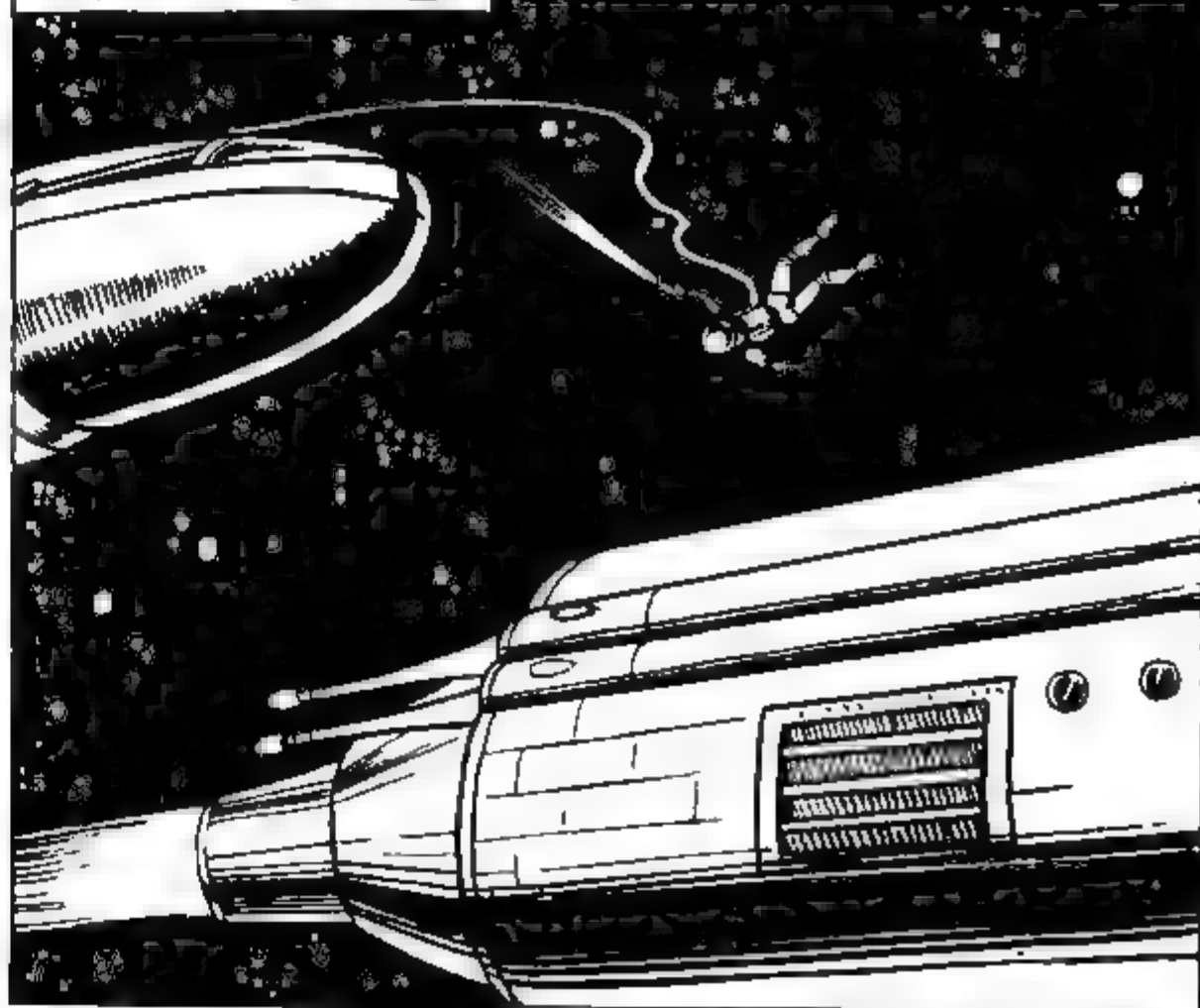
WE CAN'T BE SEEN IF WE KEEP ASTERN. THEIR SCANNERS ARE OUT OF ACTION. DON'T YOU REMEMBER THAT THE COMMANDER MENTIONED IT?

THE TANKER WAS GRADUALLY OVERHAULED, AND, LEAVING JASON AT THE CONTROLS OF THE PALOMAR, CONDOR WENT THROUGH AN AIR-LOCK AND GLIMBED ON TO THE HULL



HOLD HER STEADY, JASON. I'M GOING TO SHOOT MYSELF ACROSS TO HER ON THE END OF THIS LIFELINE

HE FIRED HIS REPULSION PISTOL, AND THE RECOIL SENT HIM WHIRLING DIZZILY THROUGH SPACE

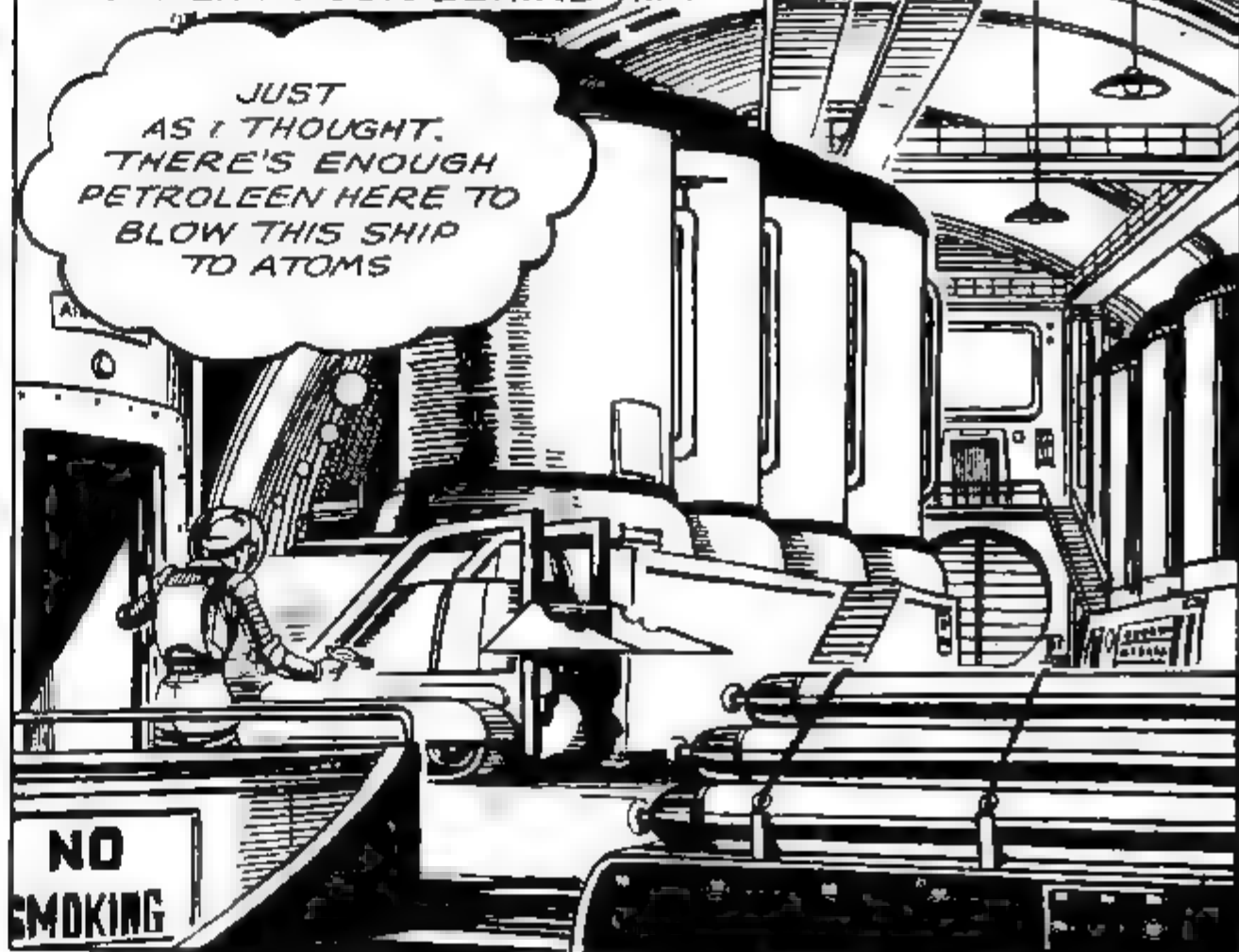


HE LANDED WITH A JOLT ON THE TANKER AND CAST ASIDE THE LIFE-LINE. THEN HE THUMBED THE HEAT-BEAM BUTTON ON HIS PISTOL AND ATTACKED THE LOCK OF A HATCH



IT'S YIELDING! NOW IF I CAN GET INSIDE WITHOUT BEING SPOTTED~

MOMENTS LATER CONDOR WAS GLIDING LIKE A SHADOW INTO A HOLD. HE CLOSED THE INNER AIR-TIGHT DOOR BEHIND HIM



JUST AS I THOUGHT. THERE'S ENOUGH PETROLEEN HERE TO BLOW THIS SHIP TO ATOMS

MOVING NOISELESSLY ON TIP-TOE, HE GRABBED A CYLINDER AND LOADED IT ON TO A MECHANICAL TROLLEY



I'LL GIVE THOSE CROOKS THE SHOCK OF THEIR LIVES!

CONDOR THEN DROVE THE TROLLEY INTO A HOIST, AT THE SAME TIME OPENING A VALVE ON THE CYLINDER WHICH RELEASED A FINE SPRAY OF DEADLY PETROLEEN VAPOUR



AND NOW TO GET UP TO THE NAVIGATION BRIDGE

ON THE NAVIGATION BRIDGE, THE BOSS OF THE SPACE-SHIP THIEVES UTTERED AN IMPATIENT EXCLAMATION



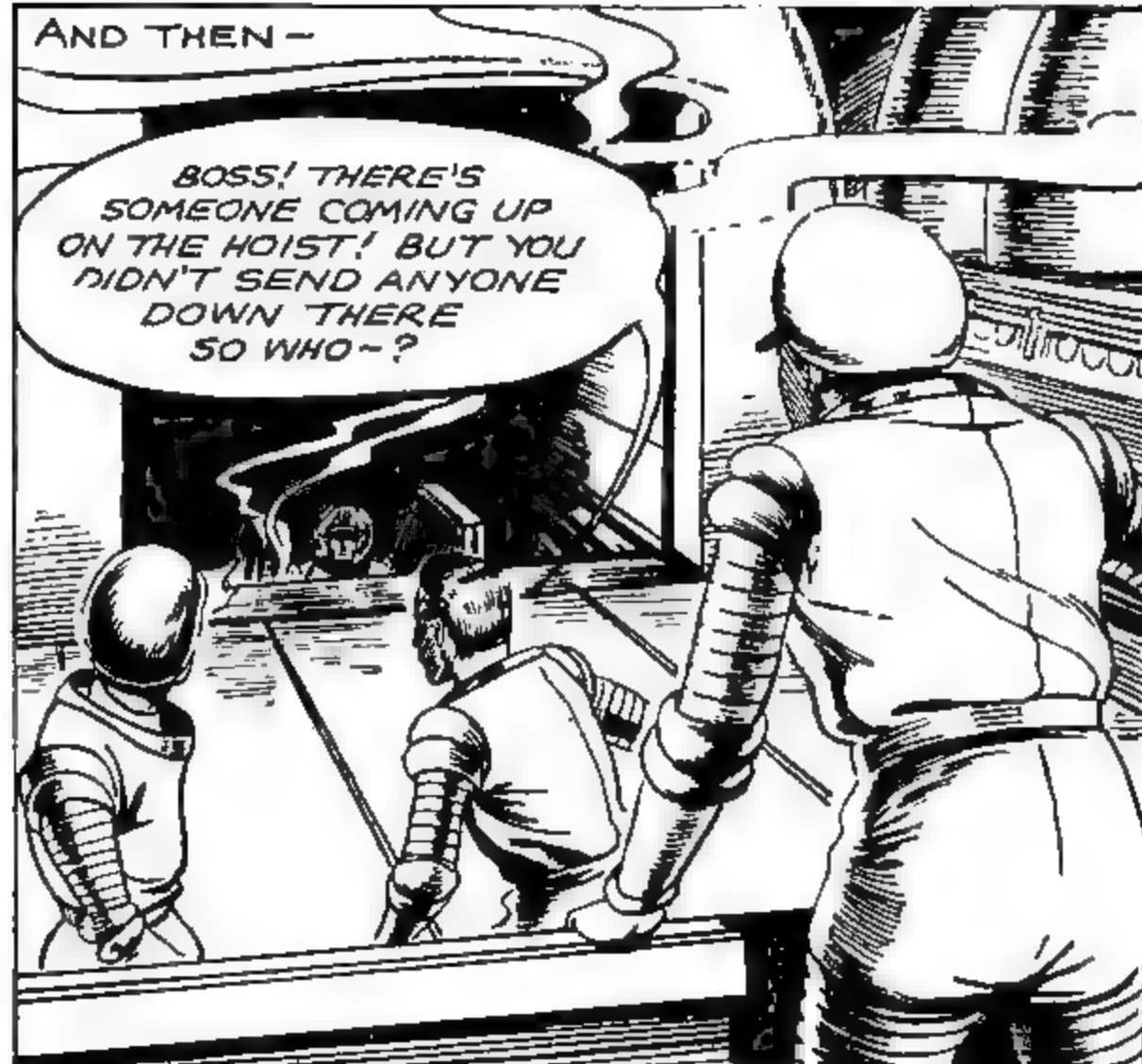
WHAT THE HECK IS HAPPENING IN HERE? THE GLASS ON THE CONTROL DIALS IS MISTING UP

FIVE SECONDS LATER —



FLAMING COMETS! I CAN SMELL PETROLEEN!

AND THEN —



BOSS! THERE'S SOMEONE COMING UP ON THE HOIST! BUT YOU DIDN'T SEND ANYONE DOWN THERE SO WHO — ?



IT'S CONDOR! HOW THE HECK DID HE GET HERE?

I'LL SOON FIX HIM!

A SHARP WARNING FROM CONDOR, HOWEVER, STRUCK CHILL TERROR INTO THE HEARTS OF THE CROOKS



DON'T SHOOT — UNLESS YOU WANT TO BLOW UP THE SHIP! SHE'S FULL OF FUMES. A SINGLE FLASH OF FLAME, AND WE'LL GO OFF LIKE A BOMB

GRIMLY CONDOR DISPLAYED A SMALL OBJECT HE WAS HOLDING



I'M TAKING COMMAND IN THE NAME OF THE SPACE PATROL. SEE THIS? IT'S A LIGHTER. I GUESS YOU ALL KNOW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I STRUCK JUST ONE SMALL SPARK

THE BOSS OF THE CROOKS WOULD HAVE RISKED DEFYING CONDOR, BUT HIS MEN WERE JITTERY WITH PANIC



HE'S BLUFFING! NO MAN IN CREATION WOULD COLD-BLOODEDLY BLOW HIMSELF UP

CONDOR WOULD. HE'D EXPLODE THIS SHIP RATHER THAN LET US ESCAPE

THAT'S RIGHT. DON'T RILE HIM, BOSS. WE'LL HAVE TO GIVE IN DO AS HE SAYS

STERNLY CONDOR FORCED THE GANG-BOSS TO RETURN TO THE CONTROLS

THAT'S BETTER.
NOW YOU'RE BEING SENSIBLE.
HEAD BACK FOR STATION 9—AND
DON'T TRY ANY FOOLISH TRICKS.
REMEMBER, MY THUMB IS STILL ON
THIS LIGHTER-WHEEL



MEANWHILE, THE TANKER CREW HAD REACHED THE ASTEROID SAFELY IN THE SPACE-BOATS. ALL AT ONCE THEY SAW SOMETHING WHICH MADE THEM CHEER WITH AMAZEMENT AND DELIGHT

IT'S OUR
SHIP—AND THE
OLD PALOMAR!
GEE, I NEVER
EXPECTED TO SEE
EITHER OF THEM
AGAIN



JASON AND MIKE EASED THE PALOMAR DOWN BESIDE THE TANKER AND WATCHED THE CROOKS DISEMBARK

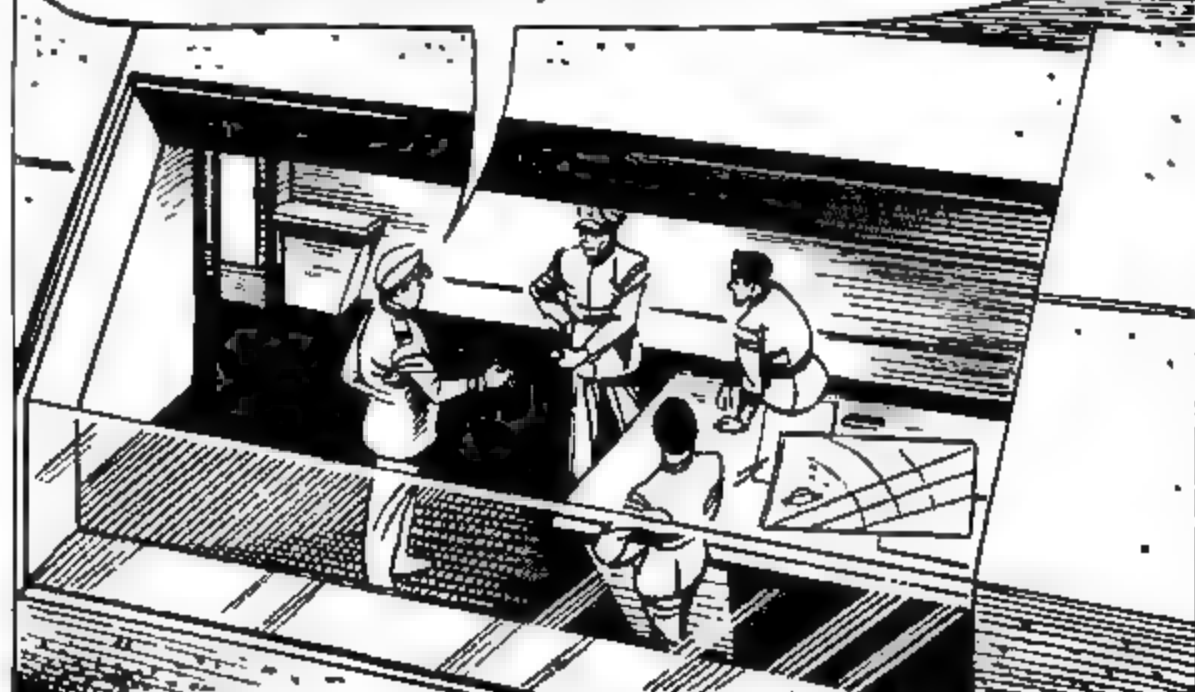
JUST LOOK, MIKE!
THE CAPTAIN HAS ROUNDED UP
THE WHOLE GANG SINGLE-HANDED.
HOW THE DICKENS DID HE
MANAGE IT?

I GUESS WE'D
BETTER GO AND
ASK HIM



THE CREW OF STATION 9 WERE RELEASED FROM THE ROOM IN WHICH THEY HAD BEEN IMPRISONED. THEN CONDOR EXPLAINED HOW HE HAD FORCED THE CROOKS TO SURRENDER. THE COMMANDER OF THE TANKER CHUCKLED IN ADMIRATION

WELL, I'VE HEARD SOME FANTASTIC
YARNS ABOUT THE SPACE PATROL, BUT
THIS ONE TAKES THE CAKE. CAPTAIN, YOU'RE
A GENIUS! ER—WILL YOU LEND ME
THAT LIGHTER, PLEASE?



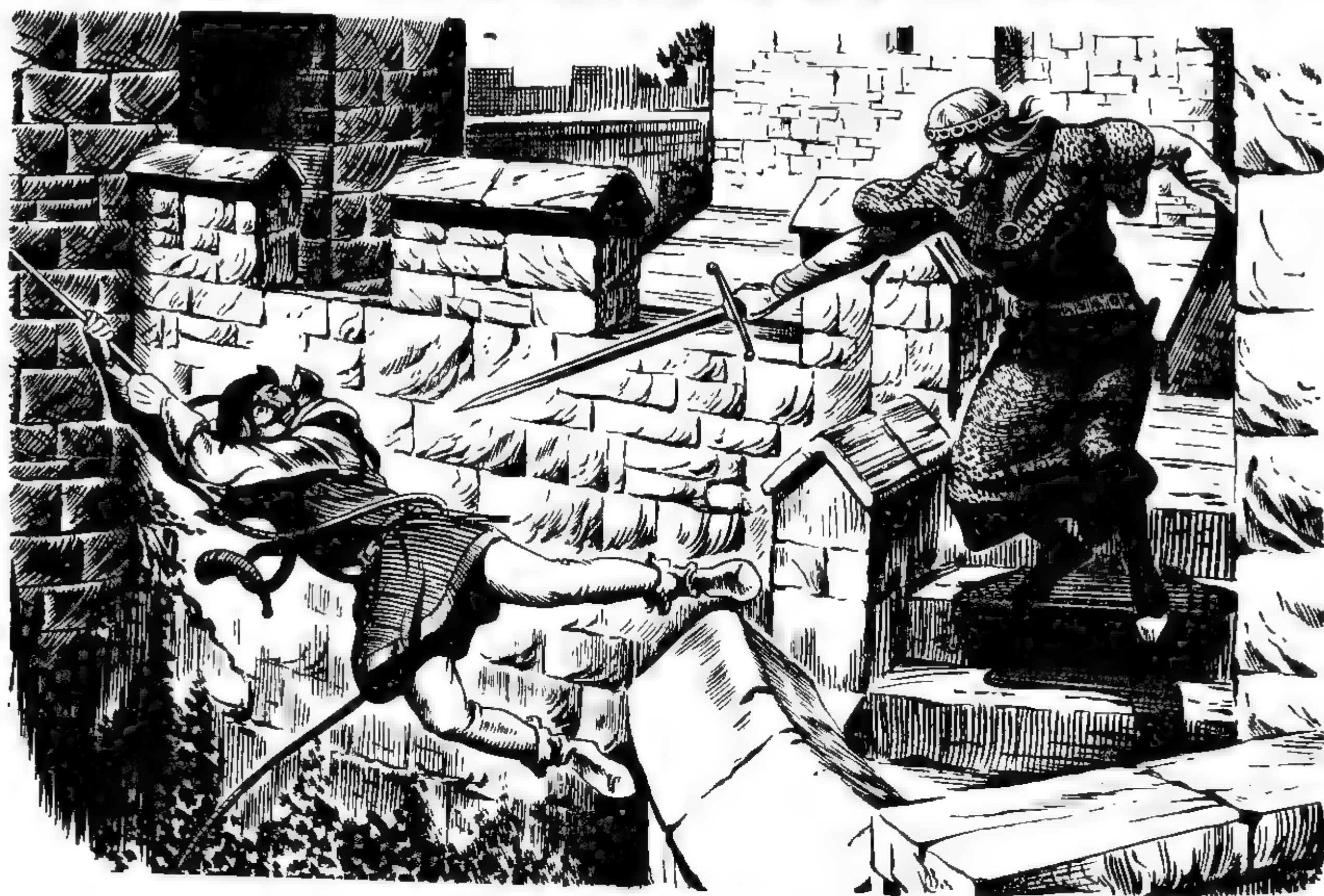
AS CONDOR DID SO, THE COMMANDER FROWNED

I SAY,
THERE'S SOMETHING
WRONG WITH THIS
THING. I CAN'T
GET A SPARK
FROM IT

I KNOW. I'LL LET
YOU INTO A SECRET. THE
FLINT'S WORN OUT. IT WAS A
LUCKY THING FOR US THAT THOSE
CROOKS DIDN'T DARE CALL MY BLUFF
WHEN I THREATENED TO BLOW UP
THE SHIP. FOR I COULDN'T
POSSIBLY HAVE
DONE SO!

THE END.





A SHOCK FOR BLACK RODERICK

CRIES of fear and anger rose above the sound of the crackling flames, echoing far through the shadowy glades of Sherwood Forest!

Grim was the scene in the little village of Gradely.

All round the tiny village green stood a ring of hard-faced men-at-arms, swords or pikes in hand. Captive in the ring were all the villagers, the men scowling and angry, yet helpless against the men-at-arms. Pale-faced women and frightened children were huddled together, all gazing in dread at the massive, black-bearded figure that straddled a big, black charger. Behind him was a cottage whose roof was already in flames!

"Seize that one," he rapped. "And yonder fellow that hath such an impertinent glint in his eyes. And yon sulky rascal too. I'll warrant my master, the Baron will give him something to sulk over . . .!"

As he spoke he pointed. And each time he pointed one or two of the men-at-arms would step forward and grab some unhappy wretch, pinioning his arms and binding them.

"You'll think twice," he thundered at the

remaining villagers, "E'er you refuse the Baron's lawful rents again. Next time I have to come asking for it, there will be two roofs a-burning. . . . It would be better for you I do not have to come again. Pay now and be rid of your debts."

"No wonder they call him Black Roderick," groaned a villager. "He has a heart like a stone!"

"Aye," growled a companion. "If he has one at all—which is more than may be said for his master."

"Be silent," an older man told them shortly. "He cannot understand. He thinks we defy him. I will try yet again to explain."

His face firm he called to the horseman.

"You must hearken to us," he begged. "We do not refuse to pay our lawful rents. We cannot pay! For three nights ago, when the money was gathered in, as is the custom, ready to be paid to your honour, there came upon the village a band of robbers. Now we have not enough money to rent shelter for a forest pig."

Black Roderick threw back his head and laughed loudly. But there was no merriment in his gaze.

"Robbers!" he scoffed. "A likely tale. You have spent the money, you rogues. Or hidden it

He Helped the Poor by Getting Friar Tuck to Enter an Eating Contest!

away. . . . But you will pay. . . . Oh, you will pay. . . ."

"But we can't! We can't!" the village elder started to protest.

Roderick's face darkened with rage.

"Can't!" he howled, rising in his stirrups and swinging up his heavy riding crop. "You dare to say such words to me!"

The whip whistled downward.

But the blow never landed.

For in the trees a hundred paces away there was a musical twang.

There was a silvery flash through the air.

And the whip's cruel lash dropped loosely to the ground, sheared from its handle by an arrow which quivered now in the ground at the black horseman's feet.

A moment later a hunting horn's shrill blast echoed across the village and as they heard it the villagers could not restrain a cry of gladness.

"'Tis Robin. . . Robin o' the Hood."

The ring of men-at-arms were no longer so grim and menacing. Eyes moving nervously, they searched the shadows of the nearby trees.

"Black Roderick," called a voice. "Get you gone from this place, you and your bullying crew."

Roderick's voice was fairly quivering with rage as he answered.

"Robin Hood!" he ranted. "Come out, you thieving vagabond, come out that I may make such a show of you as will make men shudder even to tell of it."

His reply was a merry peal of laughter from the trees.

But while he spoke, Black Roderick's head was turning slowly from side to side. He was trying to fix the outlaw's position from the sound of his voice. At last he thought he had it.

And suddenly he set spurs to his big horse. His sword flashed out and he crouched behind his shield as he thundered towards the greenwood, towards the spot where he thought Robin Hood stood waiting.

"With me, men!" he roared to his followers.

But they had no chance to follow. For from the shadows there came again the twanging sound of a great bow's string. Two arrows flashed forward, the first to cut Black Roderick's reins, the second, with a tuft of burning grass attached, whistled in front of his mount.

Whinnying in startled fear the huge horse reared. Without his reins Black Roderick could not control it, or keep his balance. For one long moment he fought swaying in the saddle. Then, with a crash, he hit the ground—at a spot where the village pigs had been grubbing with their snouts. The mud was deep and thick.

It clung to him as he rose, coating his face and his armour.

"Black Roderick is even blacker now", came the laughing taunt from the trees.

Then Robin Hood's voice hardened.

"Now get you gone, all of you—lest our shafts pierce your skins. . . ."

A flight of arrows followed, whining through the ranks of the men-at-arms, slashing off crests from their helmets, slicing through sword belts, tormenting without harming.

Panic-stricken the men fled, leaping to their mounts at the other side of the village.

"They are too many for us," cried one man.

"To stay is to die!"

Black Roderick was of sterner stuff. But in moments he would have been alone. His face furious under the mud, he caught his horse, knotted up the reins and mounted.

He shook his fist at the laughing and cheering villagers.

"You laugh now," he roared. "You will not laugh when my lord the Baron, comes with all his men to demand his lawful rent. Think of that, you rogues. And think too of this. You say you were robbed. Who, then, robbed you? What other robbers are there in Sherwood Forest but this mountebank—Robin Hood?"

With this parting shot he spurred his mount after his fleeing men.

He had scarcely gone when the tall, lithe figure of Robin Hood himself stepped from the greenwood. His hood and doublet of Lincoln green, stained and faded with much wear, blended perfectly with the background so that he was among the villagers almost before they saw him.

"After them, bold Robin," cried a villager. "You and your men could cut them down so that not one returned to Castle Claire to tell the Baron what befell."

"It is not my way to cut down fleeing men," the outlaw replied. Then he smiled. "And as to my men. . . . They are not yet with me."

"But all those arrows, there were a dozen in the air at once," another villager protested. "Surely you did not shoot them all."

"For Robin 'o the Hood," an old timer remarked, "That is no trick. At the Sheriff of Nottingham's contest for the golden arrow I saw this Robin place twelve arrows in the midst of the target—and that in fifteen seconds!"

Villagers were already at work putting out the fire in the flaming cottage and preventing it from spreading to the next building. Now Robin called the village elders together and demanded to know the meaning of the scene he had witnessed.

"We could not pay our rents to Baron Claire," said the bearded man "And so Black Roderick, the captain of his guard, came with threats and fire."

And we could not pay because of the robbers who struck first."

He told how the robbers had come by night and seized the money which had already been gathered for the rent, and Robin's brow furrowed in a frown.

"Methinks the Baron is a little too fond of money," he muttered. But these robbers—who were they? How did they know the money was gathered up?"

There was a sudden silence. The villagers looked nervously from one to another.

"Robin," one of them blurted out. "Why do you ask these questions? Who would dare to rob in Sherwood Forest... but you?"

For an instant Robin's jaw dropped in amazement. Could the man be serious? Did he suggest that Robin Hood would really rob poor villagers?

Then he understood—Black Roderick's cunning words as he fled had planted this suspicion in the villagers' minds.

They half-believed that Robin Hood and his men had robbed them!

ROBIN'S CHALLENGE

AND, as he thought of it, Robin could not completely blame them. For indeed he and his merry men did control the forest. There had been no strangers in Sherwood that his ever watchful scouts had reported. What robber band would dare to work in the Greenwood that was his kingdom? It was little wonder that Roderick's poisoned words had rooted in their minds.

"These robbers," he asked quietly. "What manner of men were they?"

The answer made his face even graver. The robbers had come by night, wearing Lincoln green, hoods drawn to shadow their faces. There had been three leaders. One had been a giant of a man, one tall and lithe and one as round as a butter keg. It could have been a description of Robin Hood himself, the mighty Little John and the plump Friar Tuck.

There had been no fighting, for the villagers were taken by surprise. The robbers had taken their loot and gone.

Robin's frown deepened. Then he set to and got as much information as he could before he left.

"Not I nor my men took your money," he told the villagers as he went. "But fear not. We will find the robbers!"

At top speed, Robin raced through the greenwood to the Sounding Rock, beside the forest glade that was the outlaws' headquarters. Standing beneath the tall, curiously shaped rock, Robin gave three long blasts on his silver-mounted hunting horn that had once been the Sheriff of Nottingham's. The rocky pinnacle's curious shape had the property of

magnifying sound. The horn would be heard for miles around.

Soon there came answering blasts. Then came the scurry of running feet from every direction as the outlaws answered the call. Back they all came—the giant Little John, the great round ball with legs that was Friar Tuck, the lean and agile Alan-a-Dale, Mutch the Miller's son—all the merry band that called Robin their leader!

Quickly he told them what had happened at Gradely.

"We must find these thieves," he rapped. "And quickly. For one reason they have robbed the poor who will now be the victims of the greedy Baron Claire. And for another they have passed themselves off as us. If they go free our names will stink in the nostrils of every decent man."

He began then to question his comrades, asking for any information they might have of strangers within the forest. As the questioning went on, some of the outlaws began to frown in perplexity.

"Zounds," muttered Little John. "Here's a mystery. Scarce a stranger has passed our scouts—yet a great band of robbers can descend on Gradely. How did they slip by?"

But Robin was nodding his head thoughtfully.

"It is as I guess," he said slowly, "these were no strangers. And by the great oaks of Sherwood, I have a fair notion as to their home."

He drew Friar Tuck and Little John aside.

"Where in all the forest," he asked the rest of the band, "would you see such a fine girth as our Friar's?"

There was a moment of grinning silence among the men before the answer came.

"Fat Francis!" cried an outlaw. "Fat Francis—the cook at Castle Claire. Even the good Tuck could envy him!"

The Friar's brow darkened as he glared in mock anger towards the speaker.

"Have a care, John o' the Stream," he cried, "or you'll find my fist buffeting your ear. Such impudence to compare me with that fat oaf. Granted I may be a thought heavier than in my youth but..."

Loud laughter greeted his words, but Robin silenced it.

"Fat Francis," he agreed, "has something of the quality of our Friar. And that Black Roderick, the baron's hireling could pass for Little John for height and size. And the third leader of that band? The one who was intended to seem to be me? Why I have noticed that my lord the Baron is of a size with me!"

The baffled outlaws gazed in wonder at their leader. Mutch the Miller's son spoke up.

"You mean the robbers were led by the baron?" he cried. "But... but why should he do this thing?"

Why should he bother to rob the villagers when the money was his by right? The whole wealth of the village would be but a paltry thing to Baron Claire."

"Why?" Robin shook his head. "Why I know not. But this I know—only from Castle Claire could such a band have come. Only from the Castle! And as to why. . . well, then, let us find out!"

"Find out? How? It is death for us to venture a bowshot from the castle."

That was a question easier asked than answered. Robin shook his head. This would require thought.

Friar Tuck gave a sudden wail of anguish and smote his forehead with his open hand.

"My pastie," he groaned. "My fine, fat venison pastie. 'Twill be burned to a crisp."

And with a speed amazing for a man of his bulk he went bounding away towards the cooking fires.

When Robin came up with him, the fat Friar was gazing with relief at the huge and tasty looking pastie. From it there came the rich scent of well-cooked venison.

"'Tis but a little over-browned," the Friar remarked. "'Twill be a toothsome morsel after all."

"Morsel!" hooted Little John. "That could feed a family for a fortnight, O walking famine on two legs."

The Friar clutched the pastie closer, glaring suspiciously at the huge outlaw, as if fearing he would demand a share.

"A morsel," he insisted. "The veriest snack, but a bite between meals to stave off my hunger."

"You are worse than Fat Francis!" snorted Little John. "And he is so greedy that he would grudge a man the smell of bacon boiling."

Robin had been listening with an amused smile to the good-natured bickering. Now there came into his eyes a sudden thoughtful glint.

"Fat Francis!" he exclaimed. "Of course! It was with Fat Francis that the Baron Claire won his wager against the Sheriff. . . Yes. . . yes. . . a plan begins to form!"

Friar Tuck's knife was already out, ready to begin the attack on the pastie. Robin's hand fell on his arm.

"No, good Friar," he said. "Let your appetite mount a little. Hold off your teeth—for I think they may be the keys to open for us the gates of Castle Claire!"

Quickly he began to explain. . . .

Some time later, on the walls of Castle Claire, a bearded man-at-arms stared disbelievingly at the little procession which wound its way out from the greenwood on to the flat circle of open turf that surrounded the castle, preventing any attacker from making a secret approach to the walls.

Leading the procession were four men carrying between them a table, laden down with rich foods.

Behind them came four more, bearing a brazier filled with glowing charcoal on a stretcher of boughs. Behind came four more bearing a great barrel.

The procession halted, just beyond bowshot. The table was set down, flanked by the brazier and the barrel.

Already the sentry was dashing to the Great Hall of the castle. Moments later he was followed to the ramparts by his master, the Baron Claire—a tall, lithe man who would have been handsome but for the cruel and greedy twist to his lips.

"What is this foolery?" he demanded.

But just as he spoke there was a shrill horn blast from the trees and the green-clad figure of Robin Hood stepped forward.

"Hearken, oh Baron Claire," he called through cupped hands. "This is a challenge. You have boasted that your cook, Fat Francis, is the greatest eater in the forest. I say I have a greater. And I will wager a hundred pieces of gold that my man will defeat yours."

"I do not wager with outlaws," Claire sneered. "Begone, you vagrant, lest I send my men out to give you the punishment you so richly deserve—you robber of the poor!"

From his own men-at-arms there rose then a low murmur of protest. This contest promised sport.

"You will send out no men," Robin retorted, "for you know well that my own men lie hidden in the greenwood and that a hundred shafts would fly so soon as one man-at-arms crossed the greensward."

"And what of my cook?" Claire snorted. "Is he to be at your mercy alone at yon table?"

"The table is mid-way between the castle and the forest," Robin answered. "It is beyond accurate bowshot from either. There can be no treachery on either side, for any move could be seen at once. What say you then, Baron Claire? Do you fear to risk a little wager?"

The baron's face darkened. After that taunt he could scarcely refuse the contest or he would be mocked for miles about.

"Very well," he rapped. "I accept your challenge."

In the castle courtyard, Fat Francis was already waiting, a hungry beam on his round face. Slowly the drawbridge clanked down and he waddled fatly across the greensward.

Friar Tuck too moved towards the table for the contest. Seen together now, it was amazing how alike the men were—and how different. For Francis was soft and wheezy but the Friar's muscles were tough and springy beneath the roundness, thanks to the hard life of the forest.

They seated themselves at opposite sides of the table, and Tuck turned to set a haunch of venison over the glowing brazier.

"While it cooks," he said, "what say you to a snack to whet our appetites?"

With his knife he sliced in half a great pastie more than a foot across. The cook licked his lips hungrily and seized his portion. Neither man used any fork. In those days all eating was done with the fingers and perhaps a knife to cut up the tougher portions.

Together they began to munch, to applause from castle and greensward.

But Robin Hood was not among those cheering. He had withdrawn to the greenwood as soon as the cook appeared. Now his long legs were carrying him swiftly through the trees. He was circling the castle, intending to come at it from the rear!

For the whole eating contest was simply a plan to draw the castle's defenders to the front. He wanted to hold their attention while he entered. Then he meant to find what lay behind the mysterious robbery at Gradely.

From the cover of the trees, he scanned the ramparts at the back of the castle. They seemed completely deserted. All the sentries were watching the two eaters at the front of the castle.

But Robin did not immediately stride forward into the open. That would be tempting fate too far. Instead he strode along to where a shallow dip in the ground led towards the castle moat. In the dip the grass grew long and lush and when he lay down and started to crawl through it, he was almost invisible. His hood and jerkin blended perfectly with the green of the grass.

Unhurriedly Robin moved on. Even someone who knew he was there would have had difficulty in picking him out.

At last he was at the moat's edge, crouched beside the still water. The walls rose high and sheer above him, seeming unscaleable.

Now the outlaw leader unslung his longbow from his back and drew a shaft from his quiver. From his waist he uncoiled a long length of tough but light line, twisted from the sinews of the red deer. One end of this he tied to the arrow head!

Lying on his back, he strung the arrow and took careful aim.

High above, from one of the small turrets, the end of a beam jutted out from the stones. It was intended to carry a swivelling cauldron from which boiling lead could be poured down on any attackers of the castle.

This time, however, it was going to help a lone attacker.

"Twa-a-ang!"

Straight and true the arrow flashed upward, its razor sharp head biting deep into the oak of the beam. The tough line hung downward.

Robin gave one more glance upward at the wall. Still he could see no one there. Now was his chance!

With a leap he gripped the line well above the ground. Then, holding it, he swung across the moat to bump lightly against the wall of Castle Claire.

Then came the toughest part of his task. Hand over hand he began to hoist himself up the thin line, up towards the beam. It was a tremendous effort and only possible to someone with Robin's tough hands whose skin was hardened by long hours of practice with the bow.

Up and up he went, slowly and steadily, until the beam was only a little way above.

Now he began to swing back and forward towards the parapet of the wall. Soon he would be in Castle Claire. Soon he would begin to solve the mystery of the attack on Gradely, the mystery of the robbers who passed themselves off as Robin's band.

Already his feet were within inches of the wall. One more swing and he would be able to let go the rope and leap.

But that swing was never to be made.

For even as he tensed himself for the final effort, Robin saw a movement behind the wall, and a figure leapt in to view—just where Robin proposed to land.

It was the figure of the Baron Claire, his lips twisted in a gloating smile!

And in his hand the long blade of a sword glinted evilly in the sunlight!

THE SECRET OF THE MOAT

A MOCKING laugh burst from the Baron's lips. "You are too predictable, my Robin!" he taunted. "You did not really think to dupe me with your eating contest, did you? I guessed something lay behind it—and so I kept a quiet watch!"

Robin's lips tightened, but he said nothing. Still he clung to the rope though he had stopped it swinging.

"How I laughed," sneered the baron, "as I watched you worm your way towards my walls. For it was as I thought. You are but a fool after all—and fools must die for their folly!"

As the words left his lips he lunged, with snake-like speed. His sword blade flashed for Robin's heart!

But the outlaw's body had been keyed for this moment. As the sword flashed out he let go his grip of the rope. He was dropping. . . . dropping.

And as he fell towards the water of the moat he was burning with shame. What a fool he had been to underrate the Baron.

The water fountained high as he hit it, and he sank deep towards the weedy bottom. Instinctively he kept under, swimming well away from the place where he had fallen.

But at last he had to surface for a breath

His head had scarcely broken the surface when with an explosive hiss something hit the water at his side.

It was a crossbow arrow.

Robin had one glimpse of the baron's gloating face high above as he fitted another shaft to his cross-bow. Then Robin was diving again.

And this time, he knew, he must not come up.

Above the baron would be waiting, crossbow ready. He would not miss twice. Desperately the outlaw drove himself closer to the castle wall. Only there, in the shadows, had he any hope of escape. The other way, on the greensward, he would be pinned as soon as he appeared.

Baron Claire gazed grimly downward, cross-bow at the ready. A split second would suffice for him to sight the outlaw and shoot.

But the seconds passed and dragged into minutes. Gradually the baron's tension relaxed. A slow smile curled his lips.

"That shaft got him after all," he mused. "Then so much for the great Robin Hood. It is a good end for such trash."

He would not have been so content had he been able to see Robin then.

For the outlaw leader was far from dead. In his eyes there was a bright light of excitement.

For as he had swum along the castle wall, he had



With one mighty throw, Robin Hood sent Black Roderick hurtling down on top of Baron Claire. The famous outlaw was more than a match for both of them!

sensed a sudden current that seemed to come from the wall itself.

There was an opening there, a tunnel that bored deep into the foundations of the ancient building.

"Here is one hope of life and the only one," he breathed.

Kicking desperately he drove himself into the current, forcing his way into the deeper darkness of the tunnel.

For he had guessed where it must lead. This was the outlet of the castle water supply, some spring or stream no doubt. Without doubt there would be a well somewhere within the castle that led to the spring.

Only one question remained. Could he reach it in time? His heart was beating furiously. Every stroke he took found his muscles weaker.

It was a bitter thought that he might die here like a rat in a trap.

His mind was now almost numb, though his legs and arms still drove him along. How the Baron would have laughed had he known. . . Robin Hood dying like a rat in a trap.

The thought seemed to send a last spurt of anger running through him, anger which gave strength to failing muscles. The baron would not rob poor villagers for mysterious ends of his own or any other reason—as long as Robin Hood drew breath. . . .

That last desperate anger drove Robin forward and upward. His head rubbed the top of the tunnel. Then suddenly it was rubbing no longer. It was free. It was in the air. . . .

For long moments Robin clung there, sucking in the good fresh air, feeling the strength surge back into his body. In the dim light he could pick out his surroundings.

As he had expected the tunnel had led him to the foot of a well. The rough walls would be easily climbable.

Cautiously he began to heave himself upward. He peered at last over the well's edge.

He was in the castle kitchen—and it was deserted. Every man was now on the ramparts, watching the contest on the greensward beyond.

Robin Hood smiled grimly as he looked about him. He had sought one way into Castle Claire. He had found another!

"Now to deal with my lord baron," he said softly as he moved from the kitchen up the stone stairway that led to the rest of the building.

Outside the eating contest was at a crucial stage.

Fat Francis's jaws were moving slower and slower as he chewed his way through his half of a mighty haunch of venison. At the other side of the table Friar Tuck was beginning to look a little warm. But his shrewd eyes kept glancing at his opponent.

He was eating a little quicker than the other.

Now as he finished his joint of meat he frowned and thumped the table.

"Verily, a poor meal this," he growled. "They'd see us starve! Ho, there bring more pasties. You could manage some, friend, I'll warrant."

Fat Francis's jaws gaped open and a convulsive heave shook his body. He had stuffed and stuffed until it seemed that something was sure to burst. Now this friar asked for more.

"A leg of pork perhaps," Tuck suggested as he saw the sickly look on his opponent's face. "A fine fat leg of pork, eh? That's something to stay the pangs of hunger. . . ."

It was more than flesh and blood could stand. Fat Francis gave a little grunt and rose suddenly from the table.

From the outlaws there rose a cheer.

"Friar Tuck wins. . . . Fat Francis retires from the contest. . . ."

Little John cupped his hands to his mouth and sent a great cry echoing across the turf.

"Pay now your wager, Baron. Pay up your gold. Your man has lost."

On the ramparts the Baron's face was cold with anger.

"Pay?" he sneered. "You don't think I would pay good gold to renegade rogues like you."

"No one cheats Robin Hood," Little John thundered.

"No one will ever cheat him again," the Baron agreed. "For Robin Hood is dead. You fools! You did not think this trick would deceive me, did you? I slew your precious Robin as he sought to skulk his way within my castle walls."

At the sudden still that fell over the outlaw ranks the Baron laughed triumphantly.

"Now get you gone, you leaderless dogs, before I send my men to bring you to the gallows you all so richly merit."

The baron may have expected his threat to scatter the outlaws. If so he was disappointed. For from the greenwood came one great cry of sorrow.

Then, like a surging green sea the outlaws burst out across the clearing. . . . In the lead was the tubby form of Friar Tuck who had sprung from the contest table.

If Robin was dead he would quickly be avenged.

"To arms," cried the Baron, his lips twisting in cruel delight. "Cut the dogs down."

The castle guards would have exacted a deadly toll, for in the open the outlaws made easy targets!

"Wait," cried a great voice.

And on a turret above the baron appeared the familiar figure of the outlaw leader. In his hand was the mighty bow, arrow strung ready.

And the arrow pointed at the Baron.

"Halt your men, Baron Claire," rapped Robin.

"For fast as the first shaft flies, mine will fly faster—and you will be its mark."

Claire gaped in astonishment—at the man he thought was dead. His face went deadly pale.

Then, as he saw Robin's arrow quiver, he croaked an order to his men to lower their weapons.

"Now, my Lord of Castle Claire," said Robin quietly. "Now comes the reckoning. For know, my knavish friend, that I have but just come from your private rooms. I found there this parchment. . .

"You know what it is," he said. "For it was this that sent you to rob the villagers of Gradely. Then they would be unable to pay their rents. Then you would have an excuse to cast them out! And that is what you wanted. You wanted an empty village, a village where there would be none to watch your work.

"For this parchment has a map," Robin went on. "And the map shows the hiding place of certain treasures buried there."

A cunning look had come into the baron's eyes. "Say no more," he begged. "You have discovered my secret. But need all share in it? It is a handsome treasure. We could divide it. . . ."

"By law, lost treasure is the King's," Robin answered, lips twisting in contempt. "Would you rob your own King? 'Tis more than I'd do—outlaw though I be. This map will go to the King. And doubtless he will reward the men of Gradely!"

Suddenly Robin noticed that the Baron was no longer looking at him. He was gazing behind him. . .

Instinctively Robin swung round.

He was just in time to see Black Roderick bursting from the door that led to the turret roof.

There was no time to swing up the bow. All Robin could do was sidestep the onslaught.

But in the same quick motion he dropped his bow and his hand swung up to grip the other's wrist.

Then Robin let himself fall to the floor of the turret. But he pulled mightily on the would-be assassin's arm as he fell and his foot came up, with one tremendous push on Roderick's stomach!

It was a perfect throw. Black Roderick was outlined for a moment like some great bird before he fell to the ramparts beneath.

And there to break his fall was Baron Claire!

The baron's men then got another shock. The far end of the rampart was lined with figures in Lincoln green. Absorbed by Robin's threat the castle defenders had forgotten about the other outlaws.

Chuckling, Robin descended from the turret.

He stooped over the groaning baron, who was still tangled with his fallen champion. Two bags clinked in Robin's grasp—bags which he had found in the baron's apartments.

"I am sure, my lord," he smiled, "that you would wish the villagers to have their money back, then may they pay their rent in due form. And lest you should forget about our little wager—I took the liberty of paying myself on your behalf."

Dazed and baffled the Baron Claire and Roderick could only glare hatred as Robin and his men gathered up all the castle weapons and threw them into the moat.

"We would not wish you to partake of some shooting practice as we leave," said Robin.

The little band began to march from the castle gates. Suddenly Robin noticed that a familiar figure was absent.

"Friar Tuck. . . Friar Tuck. . ."

As the shouts echoed from the walls, the friar came scuttling from the castle kitchen, a great roast goose in his grasp.

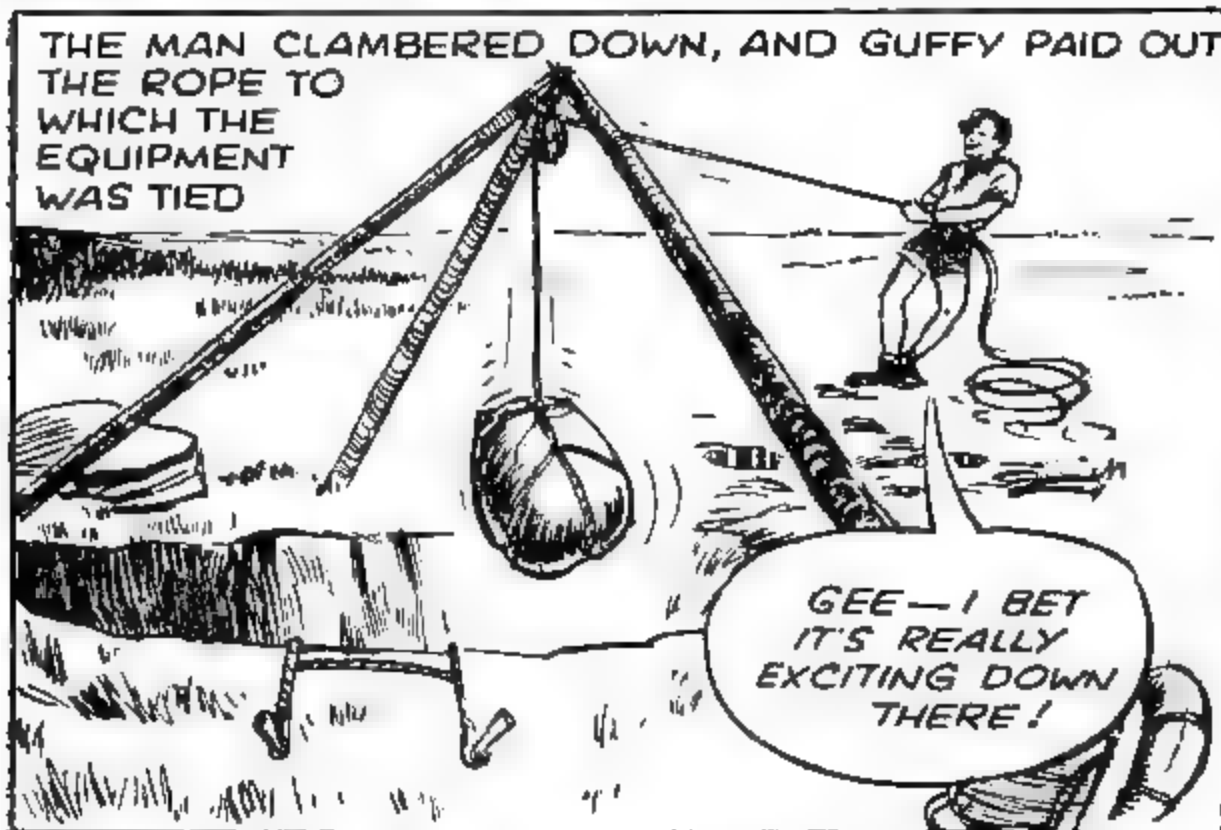
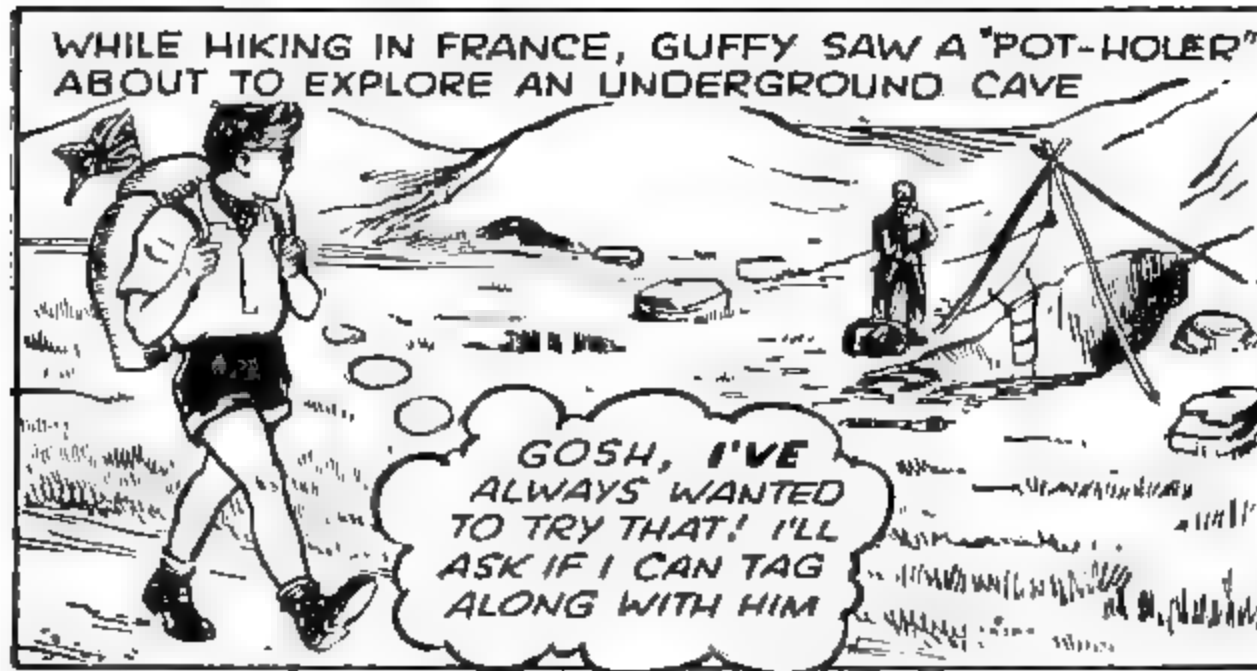
"I smelled it cooking and close to burning," he panted in explanation. "And that would have been a pity. Besides, all this running and scurrying gives a man an appetite!"

THE END

ANSWERS TO "WORLD-WIDE QUIZ" (See page 24)

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1. "A" is the horn; "B" the cantle; "C" the stirrup leather. | 6. At an airport. It's used by passengers when boarding an aircraft. | 12. China. |
| 2. A chequered flag—not a Union Jack—is used to signal in the winner. | 7. A battery gaslighter. | 13. He's a surveyor. |
| 3. To draw water from a well. | 8. A xylophone. | 14. The Cenotaph in Whitehall. |
| 4. A Toby jug. | 9. A crossbill. | 15. Broom. |
| 5. A sheik. | 10. Beefeaters—Yeomen Warders at the Tower of London. | 16. No. He is indicating the snake's forked tongue. Fangs are teeth. |
| | 11. Yes. The man would normally be facing the stern. | 17. Sherwood Forest, in Nottinghamshire, where Robin Hood hunted. |

LUCKY GUFFY-UNDERGROUND EXPLORER!



GUFFY STAGGERED BACK—STRAIGHT INTO AN UNDERGROUND STREAM



—HEY!
WHAT'S
HAPPENING?

THE INFURIATED POT-HOLER GRABBED THE ROPE



YOU ARE RUINING
MY EXPEDITION!
COME BACK!

BUT THE POWERFUL CURRENT SWEEPED GUFFY INTO AN UNDERWATER TUNNEL



JEEPERS,
THIS IS MY
WORST BOOB
EVER!

THE SUDDEN JERK YANKED THE POT-HOLER IN AFTER GUFFY!



THEY EMERGED FROM THE TUNNEL AND FOUND THEMSELVES IN A VAST CAVERN. AND THE POT-HOLER WAS HOPPING MAD



YOU STUPEED,
IDIOTIC, 'ALF-
WITTED---

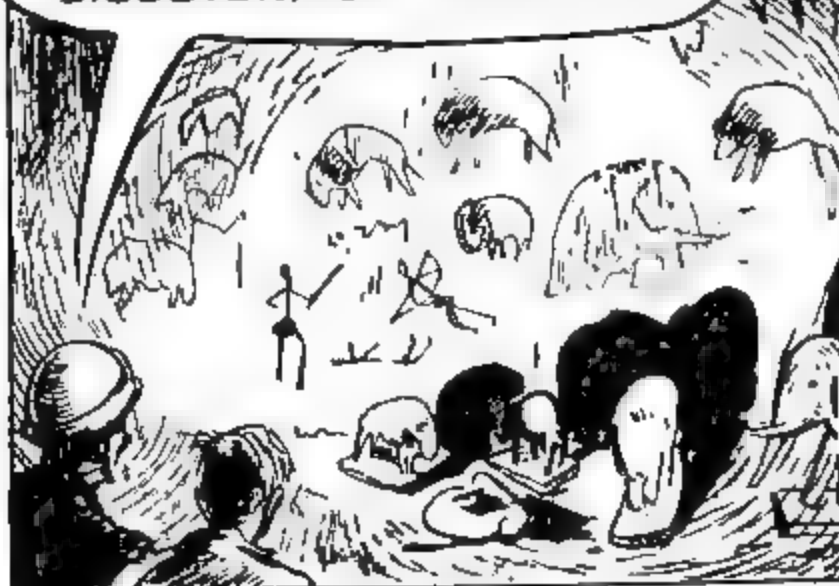
CRUMBS, WHATEVER
HE CALLS ME—
IT'LL BE TRUE!

BUT SUDDENLY THE FRENCHMAN STARED—AND GASPED



LOOK! LOOK!

ZOSE CARVINGS AND DRAWINGS WERE DONE BY ZE CAVE-MEN THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO! BECAUSE OF YOUR FOOLISH MISTAKES, WE'VE MADE ZE MOST VALUABLE HISTORICAL DISCOVERY OF ZE CENTURY!



THE POT-HOLER'S CAMERA WAS UNDAMAGED, AND HE TOOK SHOT AFTER SHOT OF GUFFY WITH HIS "FIND"



ZERE! NOW WE RETURN
THROUGH ZE TUNNEL, AND
GO TO MY HOTEL!
YOU WEEEL BE
FAMOUS, MY
FRIEND!

M—ME?
F—FAMOUS?
GOSHOGEE!

AND LATER, AT THE HOTEL, GUFFY WAS SURROUNDED BY EXCITED PRESSMEN



MY "CAVE-MAN" STUNT
HAS SURE PAID OFF!
IN FACT, I'VE TURNED OUT
TO BE QUITE A "TOP-HOLE"
POT-HOLER!

THE END

SPEED-PALS OF THE CIRCUS RING

By Harry Belfield



THE RIDDLE OF THE MISSING MEN

"HERE we go! Hang on, Plug!"

Whizz Wicker yelled the words. He was crouched over a motor-bike with CUSTER'S CIRCUS painted on the tank.

Straddling the pillion seat was his pal, Plug Dolan.

They were streaking down a steep, narrow road towards a hump-backed bridge, on their way back to the circus. And they were in a hurry to get there for a rehearsal of the motor-cycling act they did.

The road was deserted. At least, it looked that way until they were a bare dozen yards from the bridge.

But suddenly a lorry shot out of a side-turning. Seeing the motor-bike the lorry-driver stamped on his brakes.

The lorry went into a vicious skid and came to rest across the road, completely blocking the bridge.

Whizz had only a few seconds in which to make up his mind. There was a twenty-foot cliff on one

side of the bridge, and a sheer drop on the other. And they were too close to stop!

"Stand on the pillion, Plug—we'll do our circus turn!" he yelled.

Woosh!

Whizz set the motor-bike at the bridge, thumbing the throttle wide open.

Plug heaved himself to his feet.

Now he was standing erect on the foot-rests, dragging at Whizz's shoulders with all his might. The front wheel reared into the air like a bucking bronc. Next instant the bike was on the parapet, streaking along at top speed.

Whizz's hands were as steady as a rock on the grips.

All at once, Whizz saw that the tail of the lorry had demolished part of the wall.

This left a wide gap in the parapet.

But that didn't worry Whizz. Again he yelled to Plug, and again his pal pulled mightily.

The bike soared like a bird, leapt the gap, and

Why was a Scar-faced Mystery-Man Determined to Steal Whizz's Motor-bike?

with hardly a check streaked down the other side as steadily as a tightrope walker.

As they bumped back to the road Whizz throttled down.

"We'd better go back and see if we can lend a hand, Plug," he shouted, jumping off the machine.

The driver, who had been trapped in his cab, was unconscious, and it was some minutes before they got him out. As they propped him against the parapet he opened his eyes.

"How's the other bloke?" he questioned.

Whizz stared blankly.

"What other bloke?" he asked. "There was nobody in the cab except you. That's so, isn't it, Plug?"

"Sure!" nodded Plug. "There wasn't anybody. I looked all round. Was this other chap your mate?" he asked anxiously.

"No! He was a bloke who thumbed a lift," was the reply. "I don't know his name. Only that he was going to Carslake. Carslake is close here, isn't it?"

Whizz nodded. Carslake was the name of the town where the circus had pitched.

"That's mighty queer," said Whizz. "He must have cleared off. Funny he didn't stay to lend you a hand, though. One good turn deserves another. I wonder why he had to go off in such a hurry?"

At that moment there was a shout from Plug. He was pointing down the road to where they had left the motor-bike. A powerfully-built man was bending over the machine.

"That's him!" shouted the lorry-driver.

At the shout the man whirled, and Whizz caught a fleeting glimpse of his face. It was a mean, evil face, with an old scar slanting the left cheek.

Just what he was doing with the machine Whizz couldn't tell, but the young speedster from the circus had a feeling he was up to no good.

"Hi! What's the game?" yelled Whizz.

The man's answer was to vault the low wall at the roadside, beyond which was a thick wood. In a moment he had vanished among the tangled undergrowth.

Whizz was more certain than ever that the fellow was up to mischief. And he was determined to discover what that mischief was.

"Come on!" he rapped at Plug. "We're going to fetch him back. He'll have to tell a pretty good yarn to satisfy me."

But it wasn't as easy as Whizz thought. For ten minutes he and Plug searched the wood without discovering a sign of the man with the scar.

Why had he run away? Whizz wondered.

At last the pals gave up the search and returned to the road, where the lorry-driver had succeeded in extricating his truck. Both Whizz and the driver

agreed to report the accident to the police. Then Whizz examined the motor-bike.

To his relief it was unharmed, and there was no clue to the identity of the scarred man.

Or was there?

Suddenly Whizz spotted something on the ground beside the machine.

He picked it up.

It was a small charm, with the letters S.V. scratched on its back.

"He could have dropped it when I yelled," mused Whizz, studying the charm closely. "S.V. Those could be his initials. Right now, they don't tell us anything. Still, you never know," he ended, dropping the charm into his pocket.

"Now we'd best nip along to the police-station and then get back to the circus. I guess we've missed that rehearsal." Whizz was right. Con Custer, the ringmaster, was leaving the Big Top as the pals drove up. He was considerably riled over their absence, and said so forcibly. But he calmed down when Whizz related what had happened.

"Let's have a look at that charm" he said.

Whizz handed it over.

"There are some initials on the back," he pointed out. "S.V. Does that mean anything to you?"

"S.V.?" repeated the ringmaster. Then he gave and excited whoop. "Gosh, yes! They're the initials of Scar Vanner."

Whizz started. He remembered that fleeting glimpse of the man who had thumbed a lift. The mystery man had an old scar slanting his left cheek!

It looked as if Whizz was on the verge of solving the mystery.

"Vanner? Who's he?" he asked, keeping the excitement out of his voice.

"He was a circus-hand," replied the ringmaster. "I employed him about six years ago—long before your time. He used to do a trapeze act. But I had to fire him for dishonesty. A lot of the chaps had their wallets pinched, and we traced it to him."

"Ay, I've good cause to remember Scar Vanner. Lots of times I've seen him wearin' this charm. He used to say it brought him good luck. But maybe he changed his mind afterwards. A week or so after he was fired from the circus, the police picked him up for burgling a flat. He got five years."

Whizz thought fast. How did that link up with the mystery man's visit to Carslake? And where did the motor-bike figure in it?

He meant to know all the answers before he was through.

"Tell me some more," he urged.

"There isn't much to tell," went on Con Custer. "Vanner couldn't be that guy in the lorry, though, if that's what you're thinking," he added quickly.

"And why not? Because a couple of years ago I had a letter from the prison authorities, telling me that Vanner had died in the prison hospital. And a dead man doesn't thumb lifts."

Whizz's eyes narrowed. A dead man! That let Vanner out.

But it left Whizz with a new mystery.

How had the man from the lorry come by the charm?

It was then that the canvas draping the doorway was drawn aside, and a man stepped into the Big Top.

Whizz stiffened. The newcomer wore a mask. And he had a levelled gun in his right hand.

But Whizz hardly noticed that.

A pale scar slanted the gunman's left cheek. His rat-like features, once seen, could not be mistaken.

It was the man who had vanished from the lorry!

SENSATION AT THE CIRCUS!

WHIZZ thought as fast as he'd ever thought in his life. What had brought the masked man here? he wondered.

He saw the other's gaze travel round the Big Top—to come to rest on the motor-bike which Whizz and Plug had just ridden in.

Keeping the circus trio covered with the gun, the masked man edged towards the machine.

Then Whizz acted.

Near by him was a drum which had been placed there by one of the circus band. Unnoticed, he gave it a kick.

Boom!

The resultant din was enough to be heard all over the field—and certainly by every member of the circus.

Whizz reckoned that many of them would come swarming back to the Big Top to see what was the cause of the row.

The masked man thought that way, too.

With an oath he sprang towards the motor-bike.

Whizz lunged at him, sending the gun spinning yards away. But then luck turned against the young circus star. A cable on the ground tripped him up, and a second punch went wide.

The masked man reached the bike, yanked it erect, and lunged at the kick-start.

The hot engine fired at once.

Next moment he was in the saddle and paddling the machine towards the doorway.

Plug and Custer tried to stop him. But they were knocked head over heel.

As Whizz was rising to his feet, Plug staggered into him, and by the time they had sorted themselves out, the masked crook, crouched low over the tank, was in the doorway.

But the young circus performer wasn't beaten.

Two immense jumps carried him from the tent.

B-rr-rrr-rrm-mmM!

The crook thumbed the throttle wide open, to shoot away as if jet-propelled. But he didn't go alone. Another bound had carried Whizz on to the pillion seat and he balanced there erect.

Zoom!

The motor-bike gathered speed. Whizz, however, remained as steady as a rock. He stayed put when Scarface skidded between two vans, and he didn't turn a hair as the machine bumped over some rough ground. Nothing could dislodge him, and now his hands were on the other's shoulders.

At that instant the masked man drove under an electric cable slung between two vans. Too late Whizz ducked. Next moment, the sagging cable caught him across the forehead. He was snatched from the bike and catapulted yards away, to hit the ground with a mighty crash.

Fortunately he was more shaken than hurt, and as he scrambled to his feet, another crash sounded like an echo of the first.

Some thirty yards on the crook had likewise taken a spill.

Desperately he raced for the hedge, beyond which a busy road ran alongside the field. Whizz charged in pursuit, only pausing a moment to examine the motor-bike. The front wheel was badly buckled, so he was forced to continue on foot.

He plunged through a gap in the hedge after his quarry, and gained the road as a bus lumbered by.

The mystery man had swung himself on to it.

Despite a desperate spurt, Whizz couldn't overtake the bus. It vanished round a bend in the road, carrying the crook with it.

Glumly Whizz made his way back to the field where Plug was bending over the fallen motor-bike.

"Nothing that we can't put right in a few hours," Plug reported. "It's a pity, though, that bloke made a getaway."

"He isn't in the clear yet," returned Whizz. "This bike will maybe help us get him."

"What do you mean?"

"My guess is that he came to the circus after the speediron," went on Whizz thoughtfully. "We saw him tinkering with it at the bridge, didn't we? And I happened to notice the look in his eyes when he spotted the bike in the Big Top yonder. Maybe we should have learnt some more if we'd waited, instead of butting in before he could get busy on it."

"But why would he want the motor-bike?" asked Plug with a puzzled frown. "And *our* bike. There are other speedirons that are just as good—and a heap easier to pinch. Why did he have to pick on one belonging to the circus?"

"I don't know," confessed Whizz. "But I aim to find out."

"How?"

"I've got a feeling he hasn't finished with our bike," replied the young speedster. "Smashed or not, it's all the same to him. So we're going to set a trap for him. Listen!"

As Whizz explained his scheme, Plug grinned and nodded. Then between them they carried the wrecked machine back to the Big Top, where they propped it against the canvas in full sight of the doorway.

"Whoever comes is bound to see it there," said Whizz. "And one of us will be hiding behind those bales of straw . . . That's the first part of the wheeze. Now for the other. In case he shows up while we're in the ring," Whizz added, getting busy with a coil of wire, "we'll set a booby-trap. There! If anybody lays a hand on the bike, he'll ring an alarm bell. We'll hear it in the ring, and that's when we butt in. Okay! I'll take the first turn to watch."

He concealed himself behind the bales, but nobody touched the motor-bike during Whizz's spell of duty.

Plug took over, and likewise drew a blank.

When the evening performance started, it began to look as if the plan wasn't going to work. There was no sign of the scarred man as Whizz rode his spare speediron, with Plug standing on the pillion, into the ring for their daring act.

As turn succeeded turn, the audience watched with bated breath.

The grand final came at last. With Plug still on the pillion, Whizz rode the speediron up a steep ramp.

At the top was a wide gap before a similar ramp led back to the sawdust—and to bridge that gap he had to send the bike hurtling through a flaming hoop!

It was a terrific test of nerve at any time.

That evening it was a bigger ordeal than ever before.

Whizz was half-way up the ramp when there came a sudden yell from Plug.

"Gosh! Look at the roof! It's caving in. One of the guy-ropes has given way!"

Whizz shot a glance at the roof. Plug was right. The canvas was bulging over the heads of the unsuspecting audience. A guy-rope had broken. It looked as if an accident might happen at any moment.

Or would it be an accident?

The rope could have been cut!

But there was no time for further thought. He'd reached the top of the ramp. Right ahead of him now was the flaming hoop.

Swoosh!

Whizz smashed through it, soared across the gap, and alighted without a tremor on the down-sloping ramp.

He paid no heed to the storm of cheering that greeted his daring feat. He'd still got that roof to think about. The bulge was bigger!

Usually he throttled down for the descent. Now he thumbed the throttle wide open instead, setting the bike at the low wall surrounding the ring.

He soared over it and went thundering up the gangway beyond.

Before the spectators realised what was happening, he was within a yard of the canvas wall of the Big Top. Next moment he and Plug had gone through it like clowns through a paper hoop.

They shot through darkened space and bumped on the grass.

"Hop down!" Whizz shouted to Plug. "Find that broken rope,"

As he brought the bike round, there was a yell from his pal.

"Here it is! Gosh! It's been cut with a knife."

Whizz's teeth set hard. He'd suspected as much. He had to act fast.

"Get that rope hitched to the back of the speediron," he told Plug. "We're going to hold it while the folk file out of the Big Top."

Plug complied.

At his shout Whizz gave the bike all it would take. The rope went taut as the speediron shot away. Then started an amazing tug-o'-war. On the one side was the straining motor-bike, on the other the collapsing Big Top.

For a minute or so the issue was in doubt. Then Whizz gave a whoop.

"We're winning!" he cried. "And the tent's emptying. There won't be a panic. Nip round, Plug, and get some of the chaps to repair this rope."

Plug darted away.

As he did so, there sounded the strident ringing of an alarm bell.

"Somebody's pinching the bike!" gasped Whizz.

A RACE TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY

WHIZZ made up his mind in a flash. He only waited until Plug dashed up at the head of several circus hands. Then, leaving them to deal with the severed rope, he sent the motor-bike streaking round the Big Top to where the wrecked speediron had been parked.

As he came in sight of the ring entrance, a covered van shot away.

In the upflung light from the instrument panel Whizz glimpsed its driver.

It was the man with the scar!

That was enough for Whizz.

In a flash he figured out that it was the mystery man who had slashed the guy-rope—to create a

diversion while he stole the damaged motor-bike.

And undoubtedly the motor-bike was now inside the van.

"He's not getting away with it," gritted Whizz. "I mean to find out why he's interested in that speediron."

In a screaming skid he slewed the bike round and shot in pursuit of the van. The van had a useful turn of speed, and the scarred man was hitting the limit. But so was Whizz. He was gaining when they left the field and rocketed down the road.

Two miles on he was closing in on the scarred man—and a bare fifty yards behind the van.

Then from the speeding van a sudden crack sounded faintly above the thunder of engines.

Whizz thought it was a backfire—until something zoomed past his ear like an angry wasp.

Then he realised it was a bullet.

Crack!

Another bullet hit the road beside him.

This time Whizz saw the flash of the gun.

For a split second his hand tightened on the throttle grip, with the idea of abandoning the chase. Then his jaw jutted, and half angrily he shook his head.

"Not on your life!" he decided. "No dirty crook is going to scare me off, gun or no gun. Here goes!"

Again he closed in.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Flash after flash came from the van. But Whizz seemed to bear a charmed life, though some of the bullets were uncomfortably close.

He was almost on the van's tail when the motor-bike gave a sudden splutter. Whizz knew he was running out of petrol, and in a flash he realised that one of the bullets had pierced his tank.

The precious fuel was draining away.

It looked now as if he would never solve the mystery of the motor-bike thief.

But Whizz wasn't giving up yet! As his bike began to lose speed, he heaved himself to his feet on the saddle, as he did every night in the sawdust ring. A split second later he leapt over the handlebars, to land lightly on the roof of the van.

Leaning over the back, he opened the doors and swung himself inside.

He saw that the van contained his wrecked speediron. But he didn't waste any time over that. Already the scarred man had spotted him and was levelling a gun, his finger curled on the trigger.

It pointed straight at Whizz.

Crack!

The gun barked.

In the nick of time Whizz had swayed sideways and the bullet whined harmlessly past his ear.

The crook didn't have time to pull the trigger a second time. Whizz had catapulted himself forward.

As he pinned the man to the seat, he happened to glance through the windscreen.

A shout was torn from his lips.

In the headlamps' glare he saw that they were heading straight for a tree at the roadside.

There was a terrific crash as the van hit the tree head on. The bonnet crumpled, and the van toppled slowly over.

Fortunately Whizz, though bruised and shaken, was not seriously hurt. The crook was not so lucky, however. He was limp and senseless when Whizz dragged him from the wreckage.

The young speedster found an electric torch in the man's pocket and swiftly examined him.

"Just K.O.'d," he decided with relief. "He'll be all right when he comes round—right enough to make a statement, I guess. Meantime——"

Whizz shone the torch into the crumpled remains of the van. The motor-bike was still there, as he expected, but it had suffered badly in the crash.

Apart from the crumpled wheel, it was just a heap of twisted metal. The tank was dented, and there was a gaping hole through which the last drop of petrol had drained away.

"It's only fit for the scrap heap," thought Whizz.

But he was wrong.

As he started to turn away, the torchlight was reflected by something dangling from the hole in the tank.

Whizz shone the powerful beam on it again.

Next moment he scrambled into the wreckage of the van. He crouched over the remains of the bike. Now he could see clearly what had flashed in the torchlight.

It was a diamond necklace, that was still more than half inside the tank.

Realisation came to him in a blinding flash.

"So this is what the crook was after," Whizz muttered, prising the necklace from the tank. "He knew it was there. And I guess I know how. Vanner must have told him in prison—when Vanner realised he was going to die. Vanner could have been a pal of his—which explains how he got hold of the charm. Anyhow, it was Vanner who hid it there when he was employed at the circus. This guy will have a lot of talking to do when he comes round."

Confronted with the necklace, the man *did* talk, and his confession supported Whizz's deduction in every detail.

The necklace proved to be part of the loot from a burglary committed by Vanner.

There was a big reward for its recovery, and with it Whizz was able to buy a motor-bike of his own.

THE END

ROBOT ARCHIE'S QUEST FOR

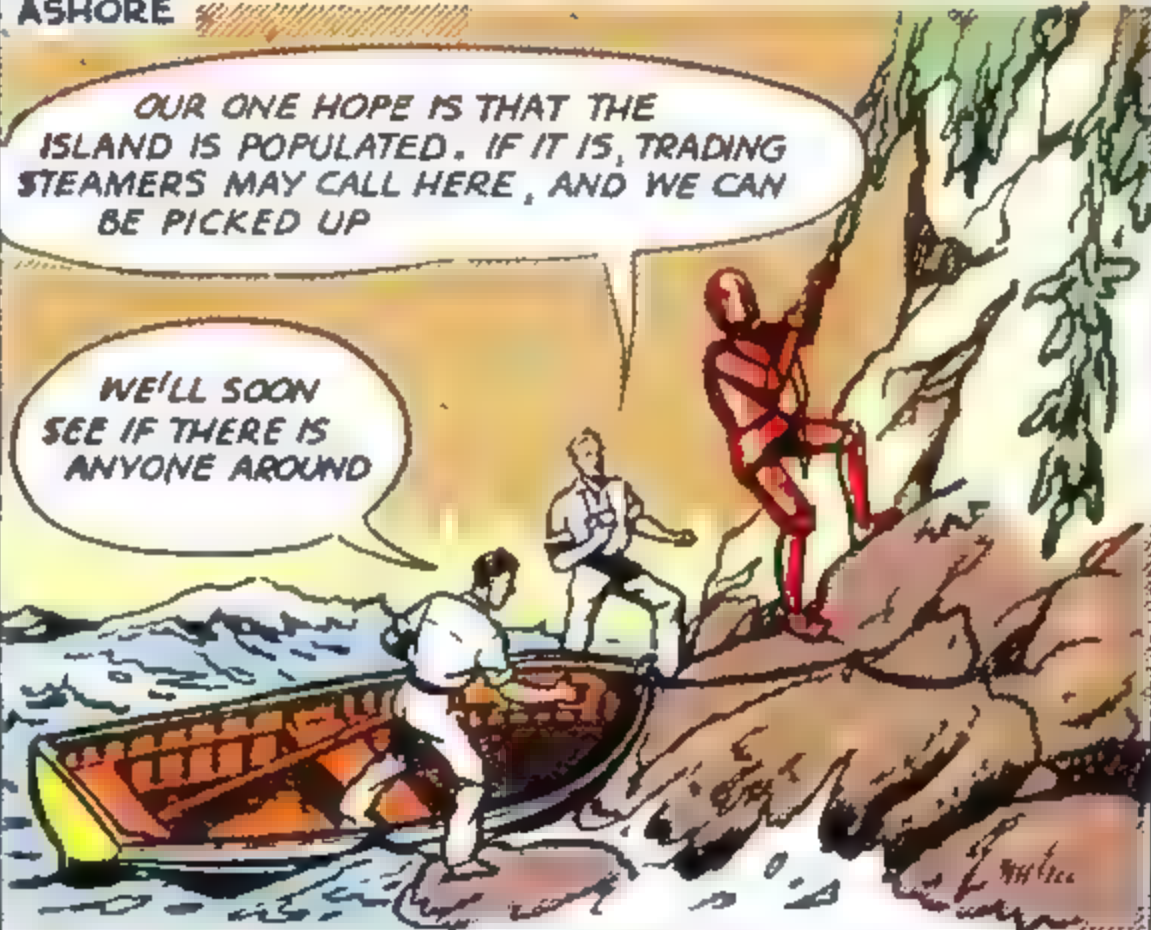
The STOLEN JUJU

BY E. GEORGE COMAN

TED RITCHIE AND KEN DALE WERE PALS WHO OWNED AN AMAZING ROBOT CALLED ARCHIE. WHILE CROSSING THE SOUTH PACIFIC, THEIR MOTOR-CRUISER SANK DURING A STORM. AFTER MANY PERILOUS HOURS AFLOAT IN A DINGHY, THEY AT LAST NEARED AN ISLAND — THANKS TO THE TIRELESS PADDLING OF ARCHIE, WHO WAS CONTROLLED BY A TRANSMITTER WHICH HUNG FROM TED'S NECK.



LED BY THE ROBOT, THE PALS BEGAN TO SCRAMBLE ASHORE



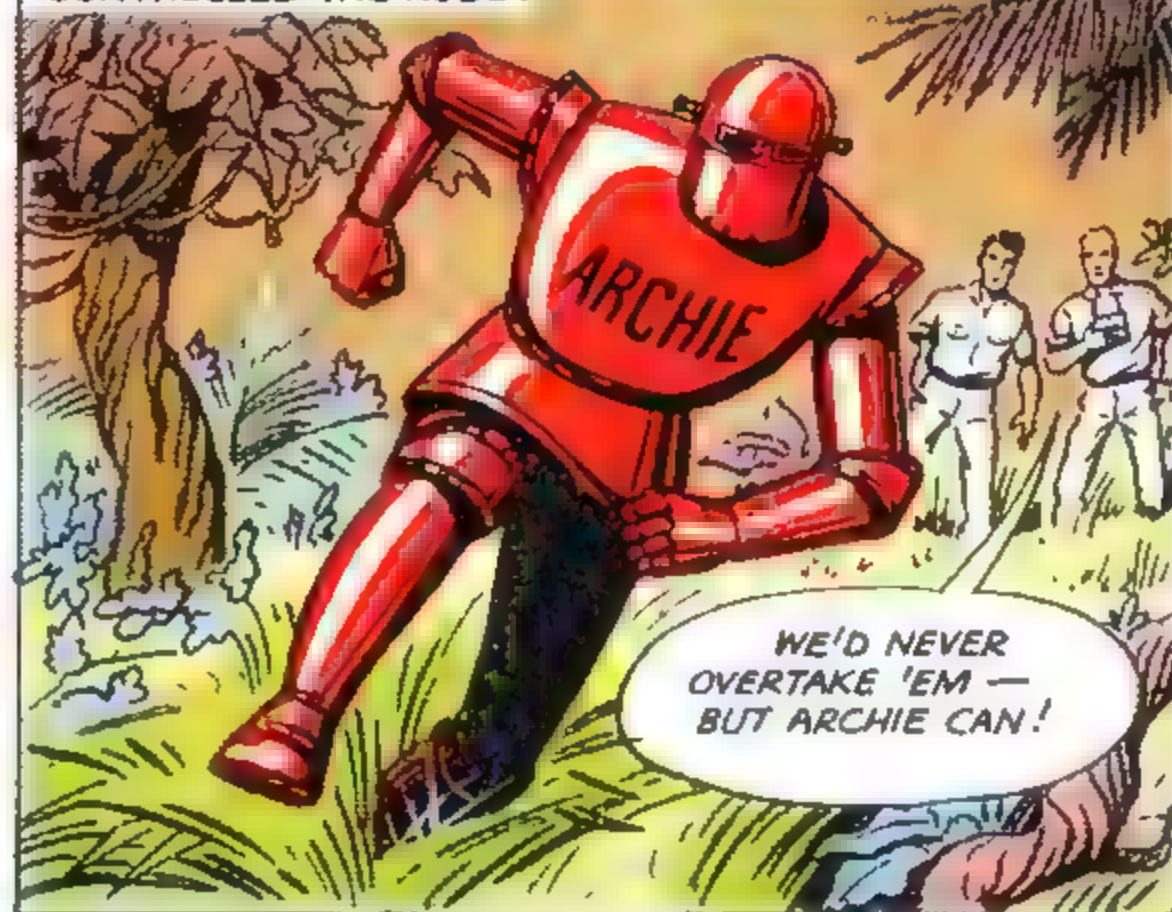
KEN GAVE AN EXCITED CRY AS THEY GAINED THE TOP OF THE SLOPE



BUT ALTHOUGH TED AND KEN SHOUTED, THE RUNNING FIGURES ONLY SPURTED THE FASTER



TED'S HAND DARTED TO THE TRANSMITTER WHICH CONTROLLED THE ROBOT



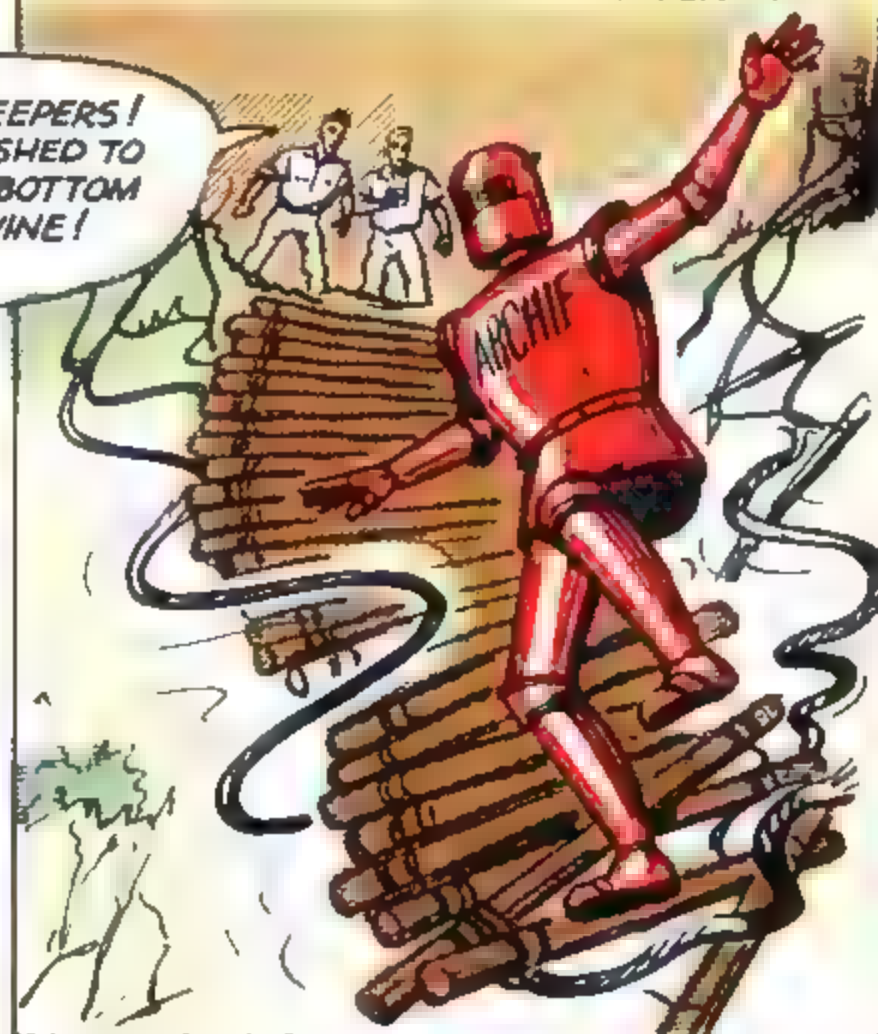
THE GREAT ROBOT STREAKED IN PURSUIT OF THE NATIVES



THAT'S THE IDEA, CHUM. STEP IT OUT! YOU HALT THEM UNTIL WE CATCH UP

JUMPING JEEPERS! HE'LL BE SMASHED TO BITS ON THE BOTTOM OF THAT RAVINE!

THE NATIVES CROSSED THE BRIDGE - BUT ARCHIE'S WEIGHT PROVED TOO MUCH FOR IT



IN THE NICK OF TIME, TED MADE ARCHIE SEIZE HOLD OF A TRAILING VINE



AS THE ROBOT BEGAN TO CLIMB BACK TO SAFETY, NEITHER PAL NOTICED WHAT WAS HAPPENING BEHIND THEM



PHÉW, I THOUGHT ARCHIE WOULD CRASH DOWN AND BE WRECKED!

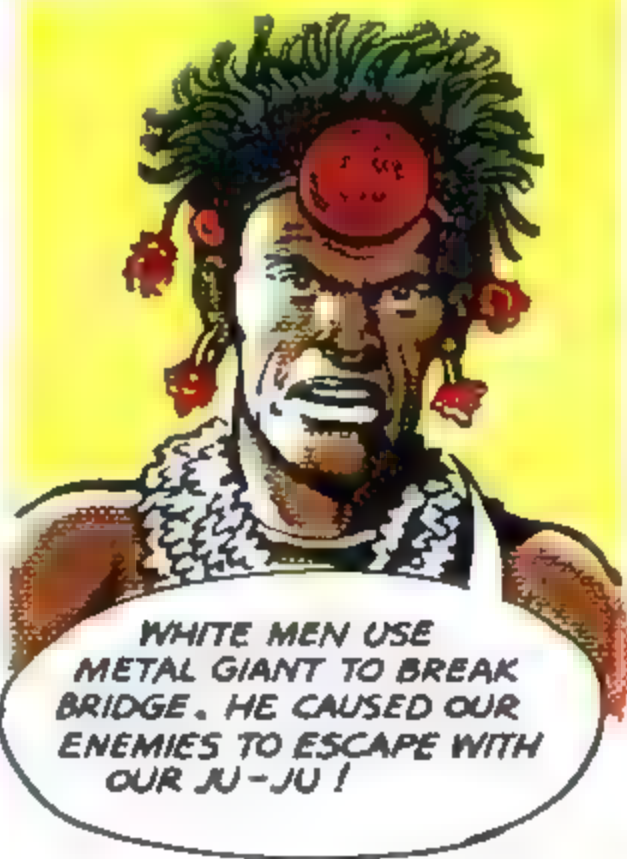
IT WAS A MIGHTY CLOSE THING. NOW I'M AFRAID WE'VE LOST THOSE CHAPS WITH THE IDOL

THE NEXT MOMENT -



HEY! WHAT GOES ON?

THE PALS SOON FOUND OUT! WHILE FEROCIOUS ISLANDERS HELD THEM HELPLESS, THE CHIEF ANGRILY STEPPED FORWARD



WHITE MEN USE METAL GIANT TO BREAK BRIDGE. HE CAUSED OUR ENEMIES TO ESCAPE WITH OUR JU-JU!

YOUR JU-JU? GOSH - WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IT BELONGED TO YOU!

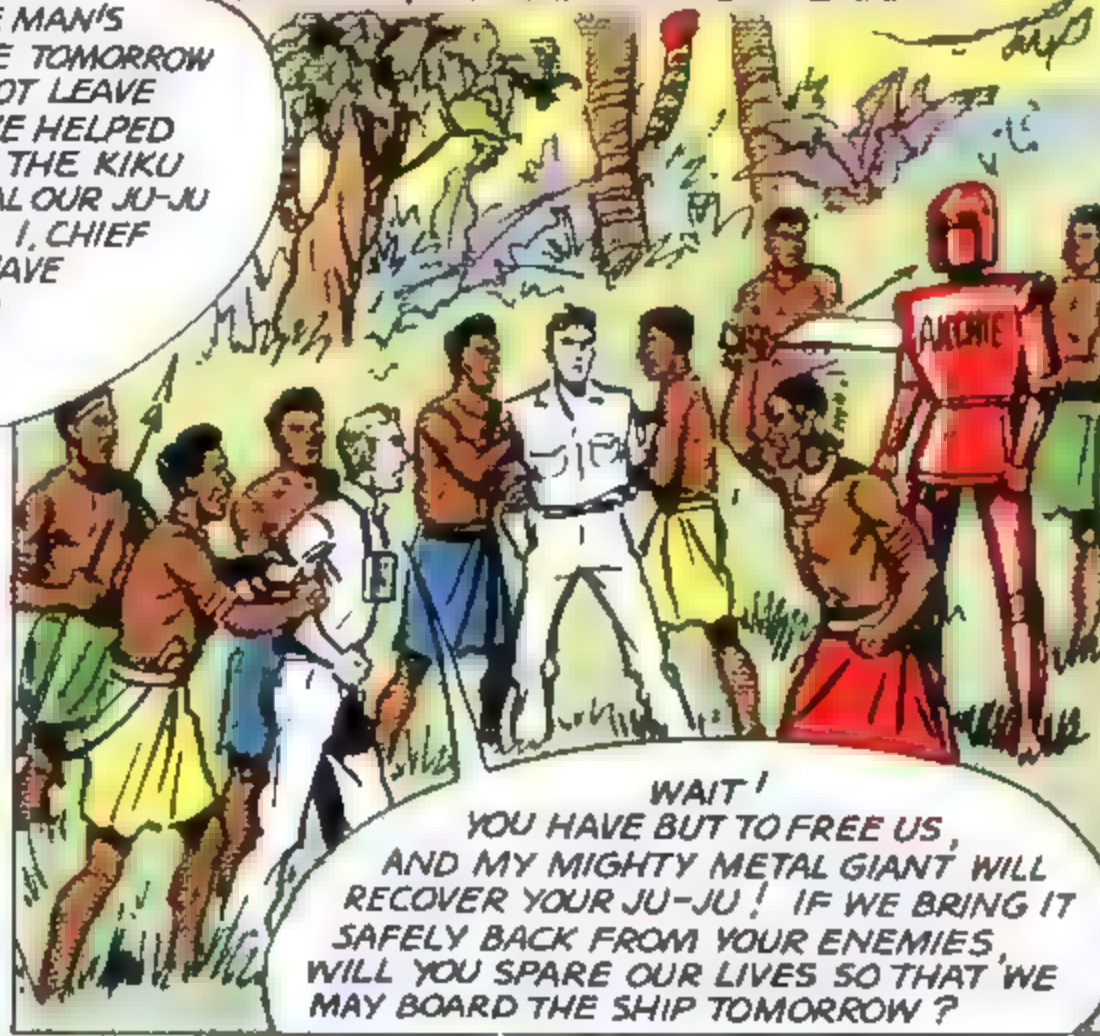


WE'VE BEEN SHIPWRECKED, AND WE WANTED TO ASK THEM WHEN THE NEXT TRADING SHIP IS LIKELY TO CALL HERE SO THAT WE CAN BE PICKED UP!



ME NOT BELIEVE YOU. A WHITE MAN'S SHIP CALLS HERE TOMORROW BUT YOU MAY NOT LEAVE ON IT. YOU HAVE HELPED OUR ENEMIES, THE KIKU TRIBE, TO STEAL OUR JU-JU SO YOU DIE! I, CHIEF MALANI, HAVE SPOKEN

EVEN AS THE PALS' LIVES HUNG IN THE BALANCE, TED HAD A DESPERATE IDEA



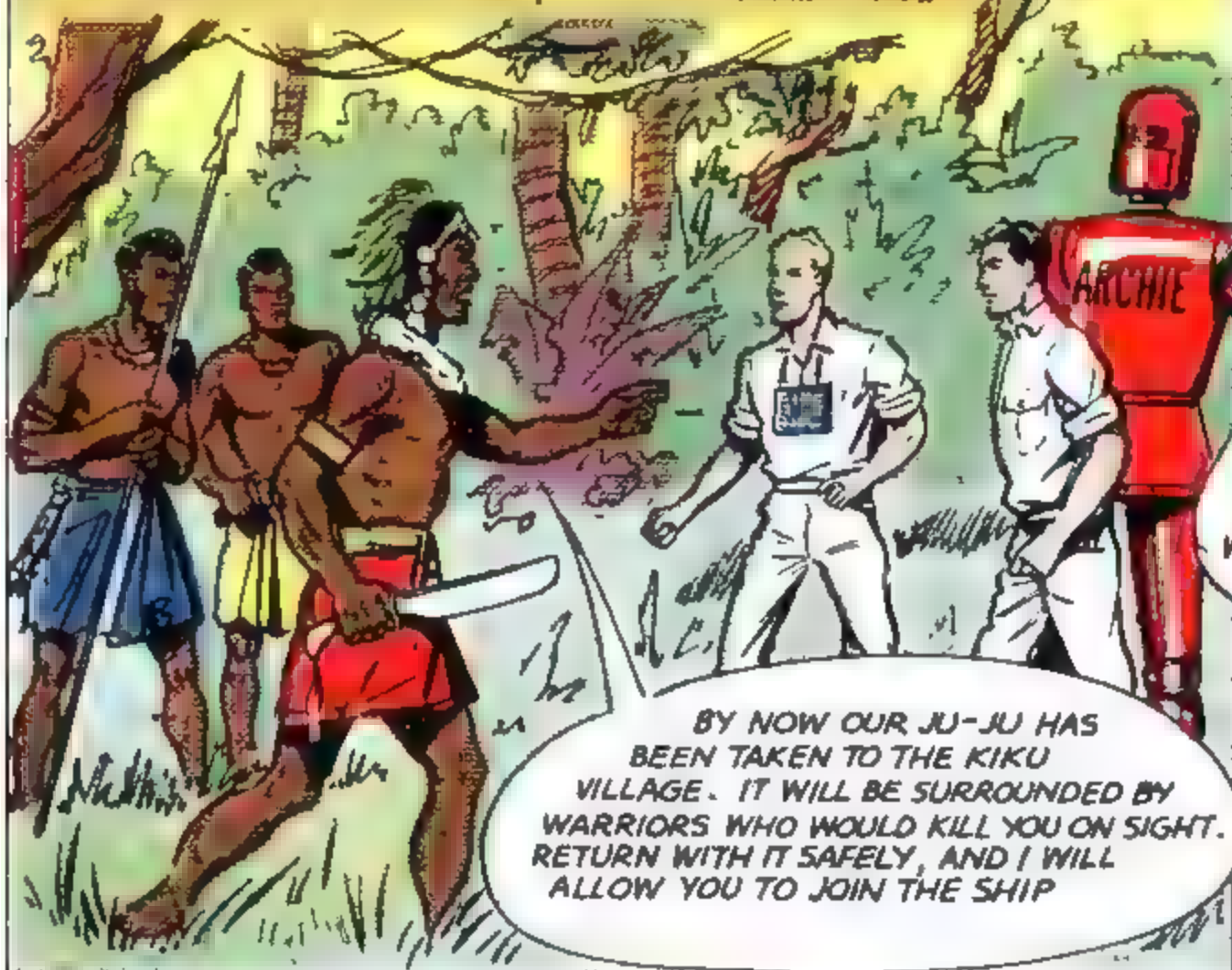
WAIT! YOU HAVE BUT TO FREE US, AND MY MIGHTY METAL GIANT WILL RECOVER YOUR JU-JU! IF WE BRING IT SAFELY BACK FROM YOUR ENEMIES, WILL YOU SPARE OUR LIVES SO THAT WE MAY BOARD THE SHIP TOMORROW?

THE CHIEF HESITATED, THEN —



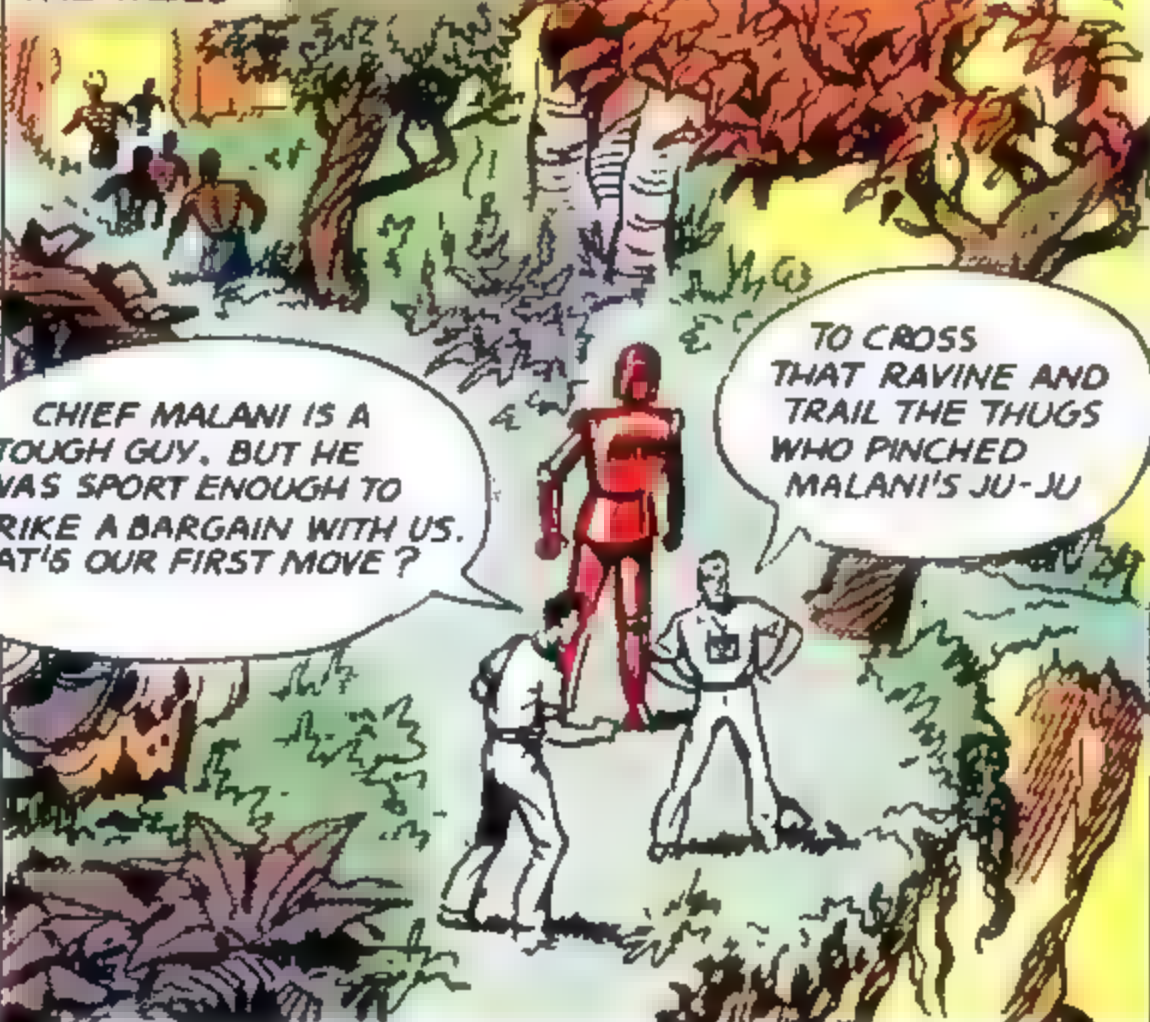
VERY WELL. BUT DO NOT THINK YOU CAN OUTWIT ME. I AM ALL POWERFUL!

AT A SIGNAL FROM THE CHIEF, THE PALS WERE FREED



BY NOW OUR JU-JU HAS BEEN TAKEN TO THE KIKU VILLAGE. IT WILL BE SURROUNDED BY WARRIORS WHO WOULD KILL YOU ON SIGHT. RETURN WITH IT SAFELY, AND I WILL ALLOW YOU TO JOIN THE SHIP

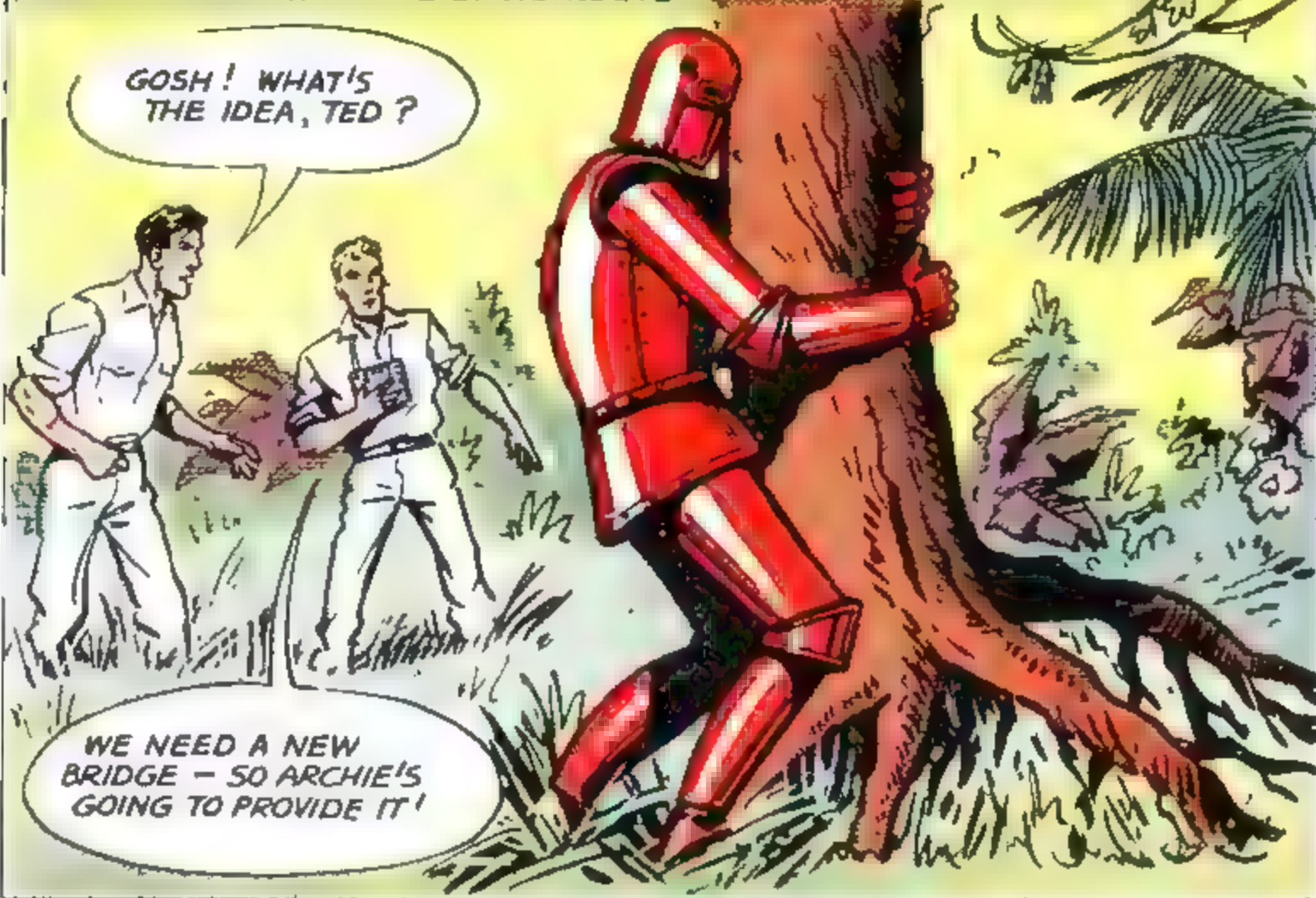
LIKE SHADOWS THE WARRIORS DISAPPEARED AMONG THE TREES



CHIEF MALANI IS A TOUGH GUY, BUT HE WAS SPORT ENOUGH TO STRIKE A BARGAIN WITH US. WHAT'S OUR FIRST MOVE?

TO CROSS THAT RAVINE AND TRAIL THE THUGS WHO PINCHED MALANI'S JU-JU

TED OPERATED THE BUTTONS OF HIS TRANSMITTER AND ARCHIE AT ONCE BEGAN TO TEAR UP A TREE BY ITS ROOTS



GOSH! WHAT'S THE IDEA, TED?

WE NEED A NEW BRIDGE — SO ARCHIE'S GOING TO PROVIDE IT!

DISPLAYING HIS TREMENDOUS STRENGTH, THE ROBOT CARRIED THE TREE TO THE SIDE OF THE RAVINE





THEN —

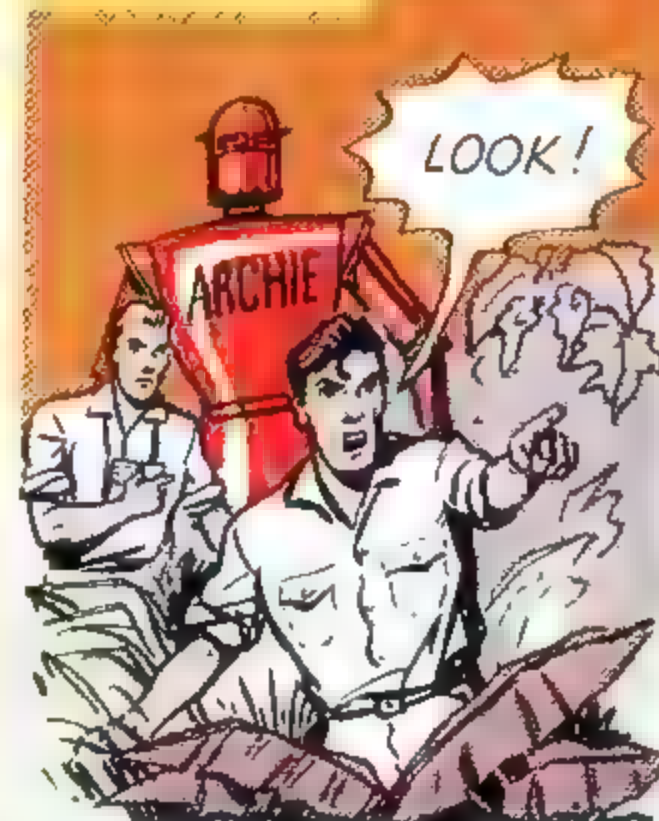
NICE WORK!
THERE SHE GOES!



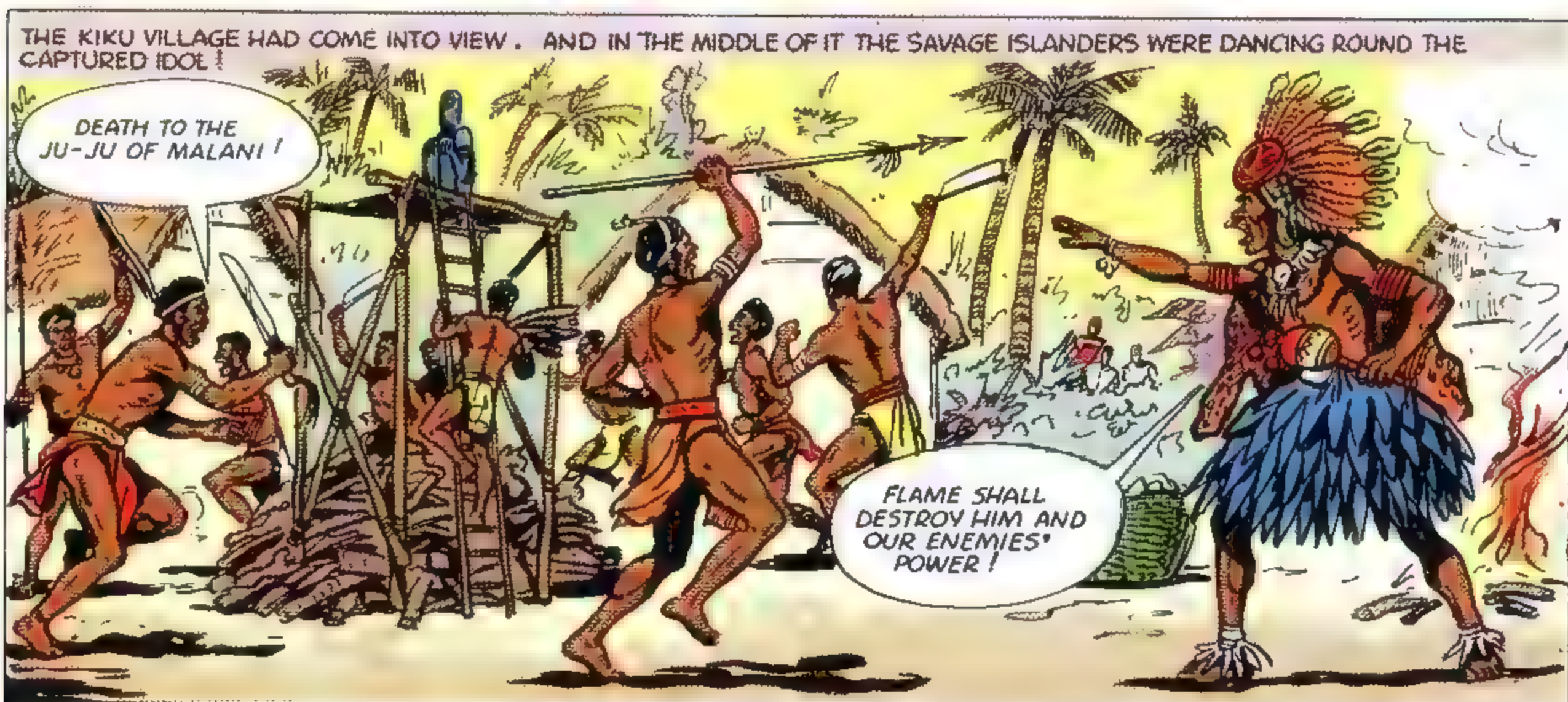
THE TREE LANDED WITH ONE END
ON EACH BANK

SO FAR, SO GOOD!
NOW TO CROSS IT AND
TRAIL THOSE THIEVING
SAVAGES TO THEIR
VILLAGE

THE NATIVES' TRACKS WERE
QUITE EASY TO FOLLOW.
ACCOMPANIED BY ARCHIE, THE
PALS PRESSED ON THROUGH
THE UNDERGROWTH. ALL AT
ONCE KEN STOPPED AND
UTTERED A GASP



LOOK!



THE KIKU VILLAGE HAD COME INTO VIEW. AND IN THE MIDDLE OF IT THE SAVAGE ISLANDERS WERE DANCING ROUND THE CAPTURED IDOL!

DEATH TO THE
JU-JU OF MALANI!

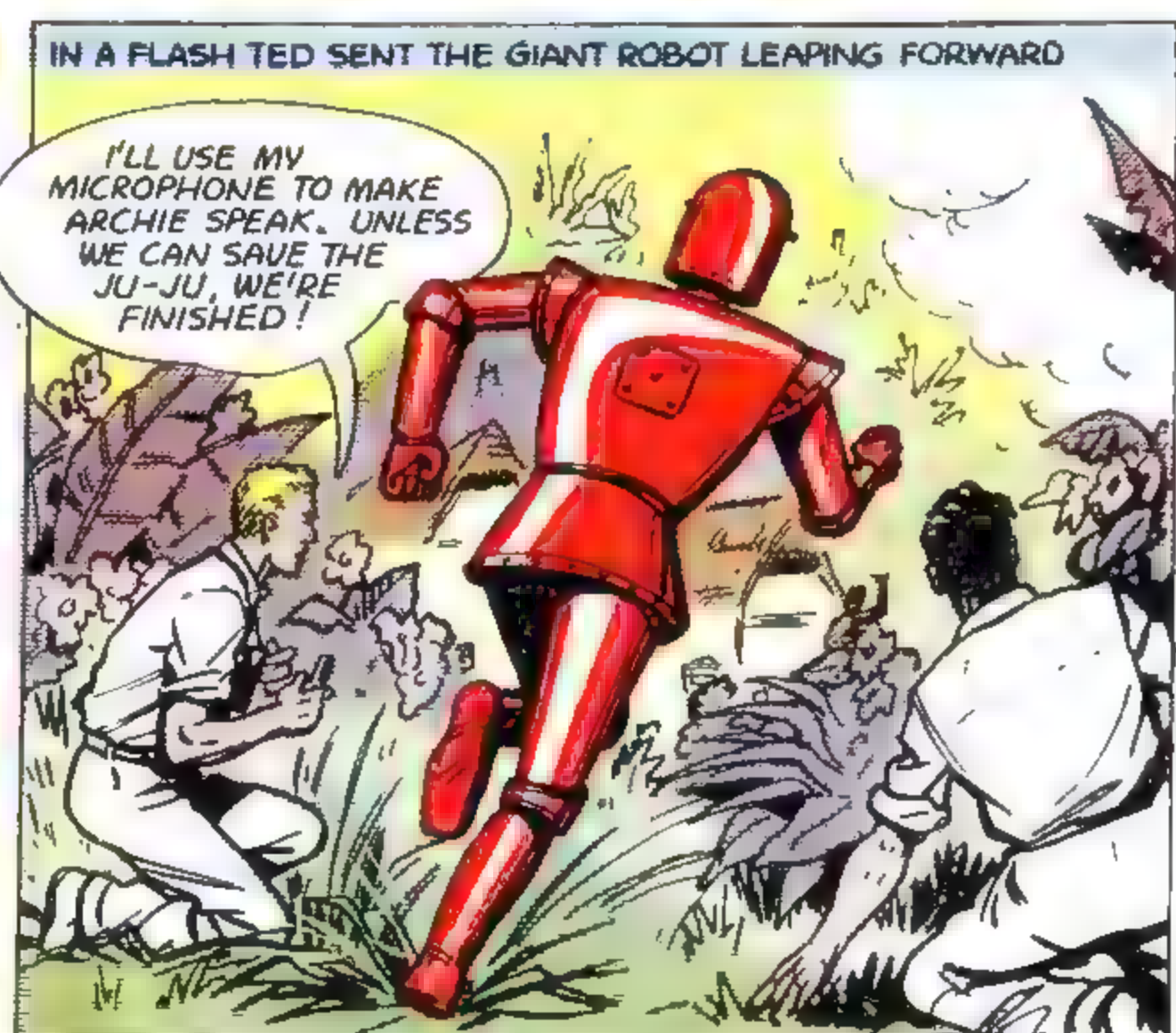
FLAME SHALL
DESTROY HIM AND
OUR ENEMIES'
POWER!



THE PALS SAW THE WITCH-DOCTOR SNATCH UP A BRAND

TED! THEY
MEAN TO BURN
THE JU-JU!

PHEW!
IF THEY DO THAT
WE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO TAKE
IT BACK TO CHIEF MALANI — AND
THAT MEANS WE STAND LITTLE
CHANCE OF BEING PICKED
UP BY THE TRADING SHIP!



IN A FLASH TED SENT THE GIANT ROBOT LEAPING FORWARD

I'LL USE MY
MICROPHONE TO MAKE
ARCHIE SPEAK. UNLESS
WE CAN SAVE THE
JU-JU, WE'RE
FINISHED!

THE WITCH-DOCTOR WAS THE FIRST TO SPOT ARCHIE. HE REELED BACK, HIS EYES WIDE WITH AMAZEMENT



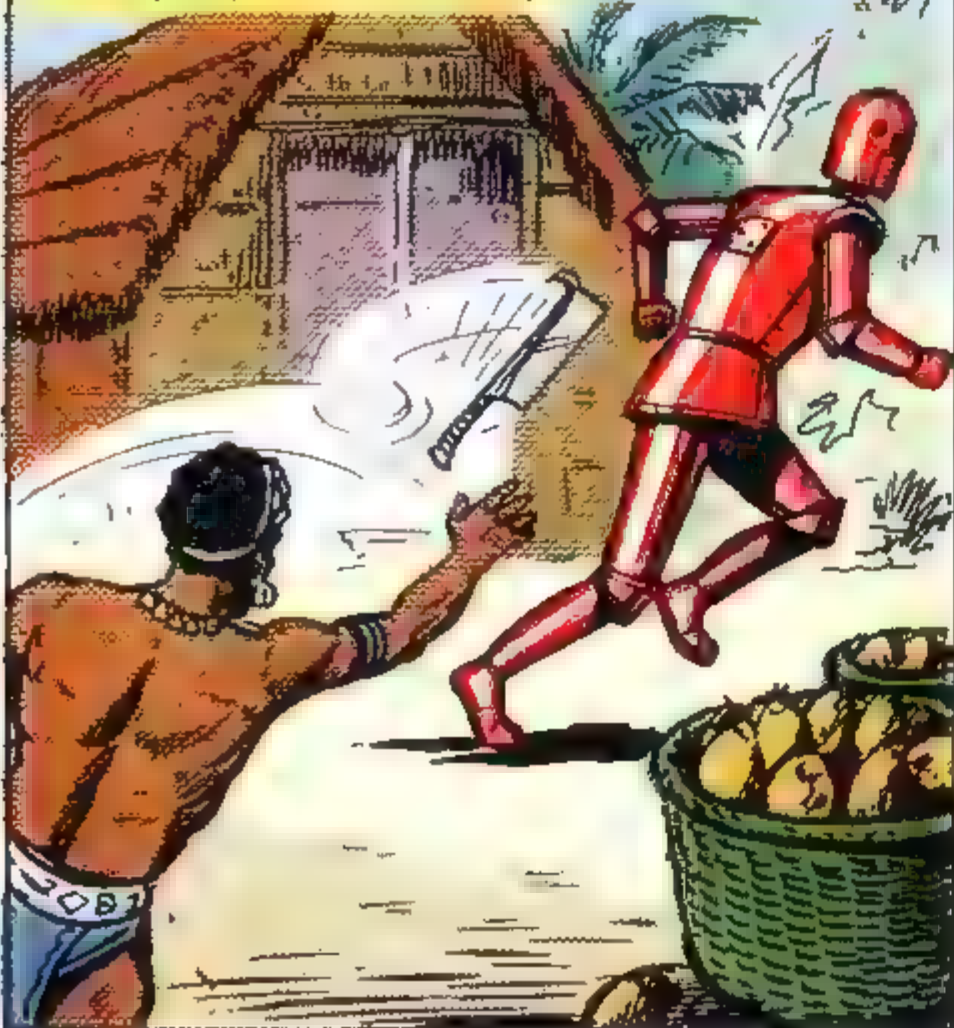
THEN TED'S WORDS, SPOKEN INTO A MICROPHONE, BOOMED OUT FROM THE LOUD-SPEAKER INSIDE ARCHIE



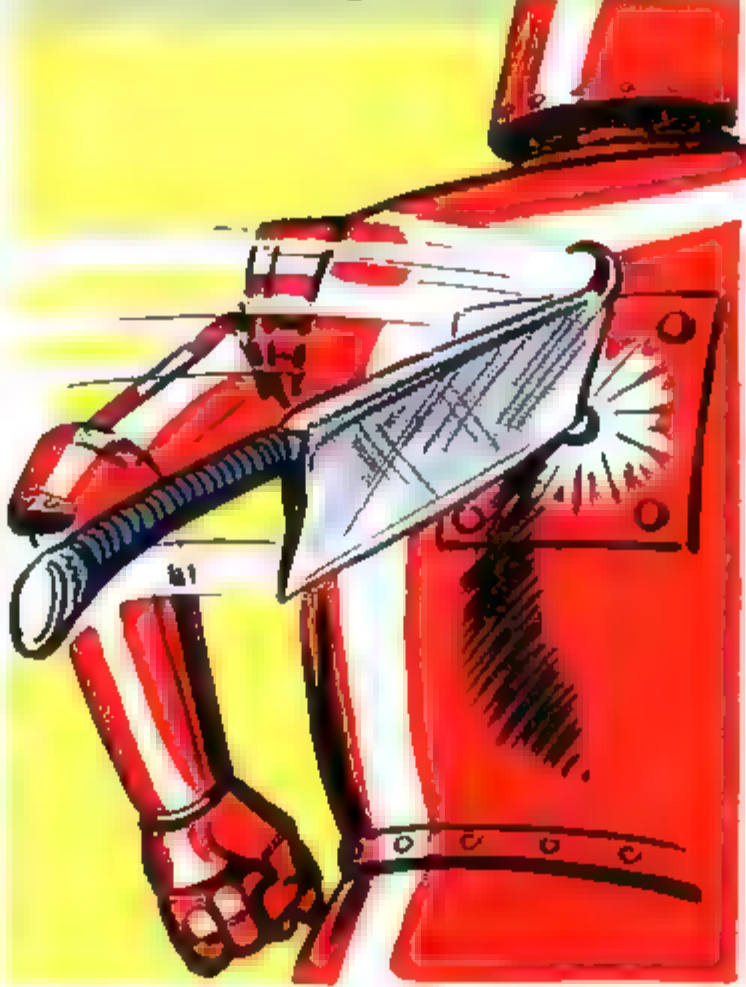
FLEE FOR YOUR LIVES, LITTLE MEN! I COME FOR THE JU-JU YOU HAVE STOLEN! MY WRATH IS UPON YOU!

RUN! IT IS A METAL WARRIOR WITH A VOICE LIKE THUNDER!

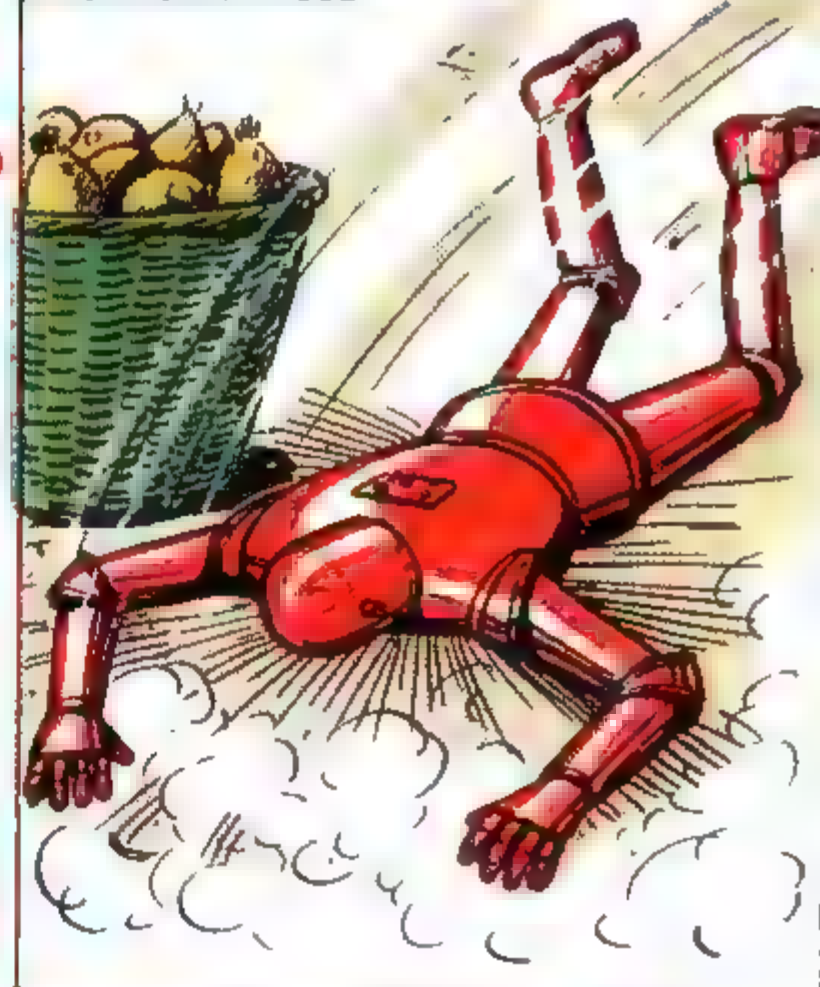
IN HIS VERY TERROR, ONE NATIVE THREW A MATCHET AT THE ROBOT



QUITE BY CHANCE IT STRUCK A PUSH-BUTTON ON ARCHIE'S CONTROL-PANEL



INSTANTLY THE GREAT ROBOT CRASHED FULL LENGTH - AND LAY MOTIONLESS

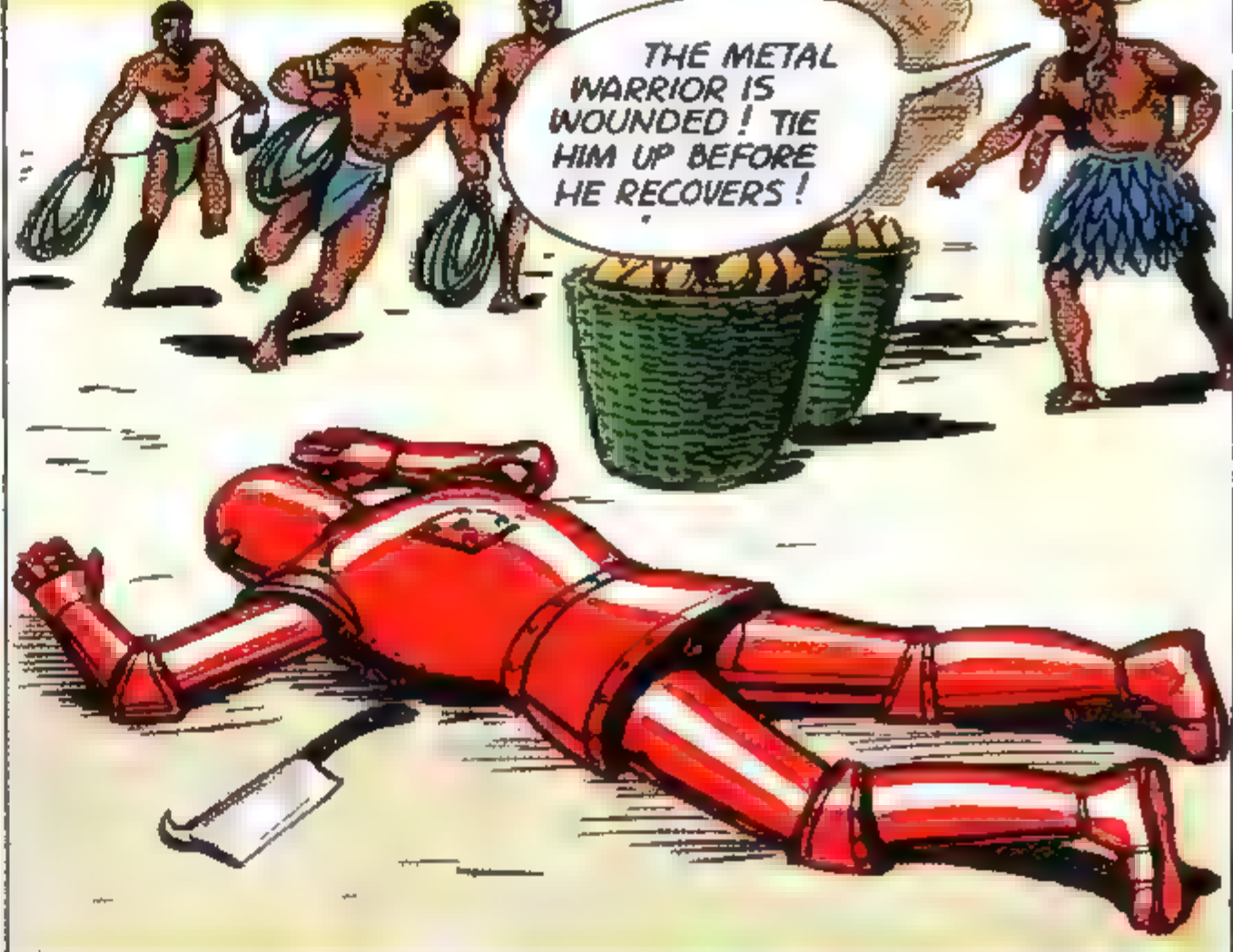


WHAT'S HAPPENED? QUICK, TED - MAKE ARCHIE GET UP!



I CAN'T! THE MATCHET - MUST HAVE HIT HIS MASTER - SWITCH AND TURNED OFF THE POWER!

RECOVERING FROM THEIR FEAR, THE TRIUMPHANT KIKU RUSHED BACK WITH ROPES



THE METAL WARRIOR IS WOUNDED! TIE HIM UP BEFORE HE RECOVERS!

WITHIN A FEW MINUTES ARCHIE WAS TRUSSED AND PEGGED TO THE GROUND

COME ! WE WILL BURN THE JU-JU FIRST AND THEN DEAL WITH THE METAL WARRIOR !

AIEE ! WE DESTROY BOTH !

TEETH GRITTED, TED LAUNCHED HIMSELF INTO ACTION

WE CAN'T FIGHT THAT MOB ALONE. WE NEED ARCHIE'S HELP - AND QUICK, TOO, BEFORE THE JU-JU IS DESTROYED. YOU WAIT HERE, KEN !

KEEPING TO THE SHADOW OF THE TREES, TED SPURTED FOR WHERE ARCHIE LAY. BUT SUDDENLY A KIKU SPEARMAN TURNED, AND -

IT IS A WHITE MAN ! HE SHALL DIE !

THE SPEAR FLASHED BETWEEN TED'S FEET AND TRIPPED HIM UP

HECK ! THEY'LL BE ON ME BEFORE I CAN REACH ARCHIE !

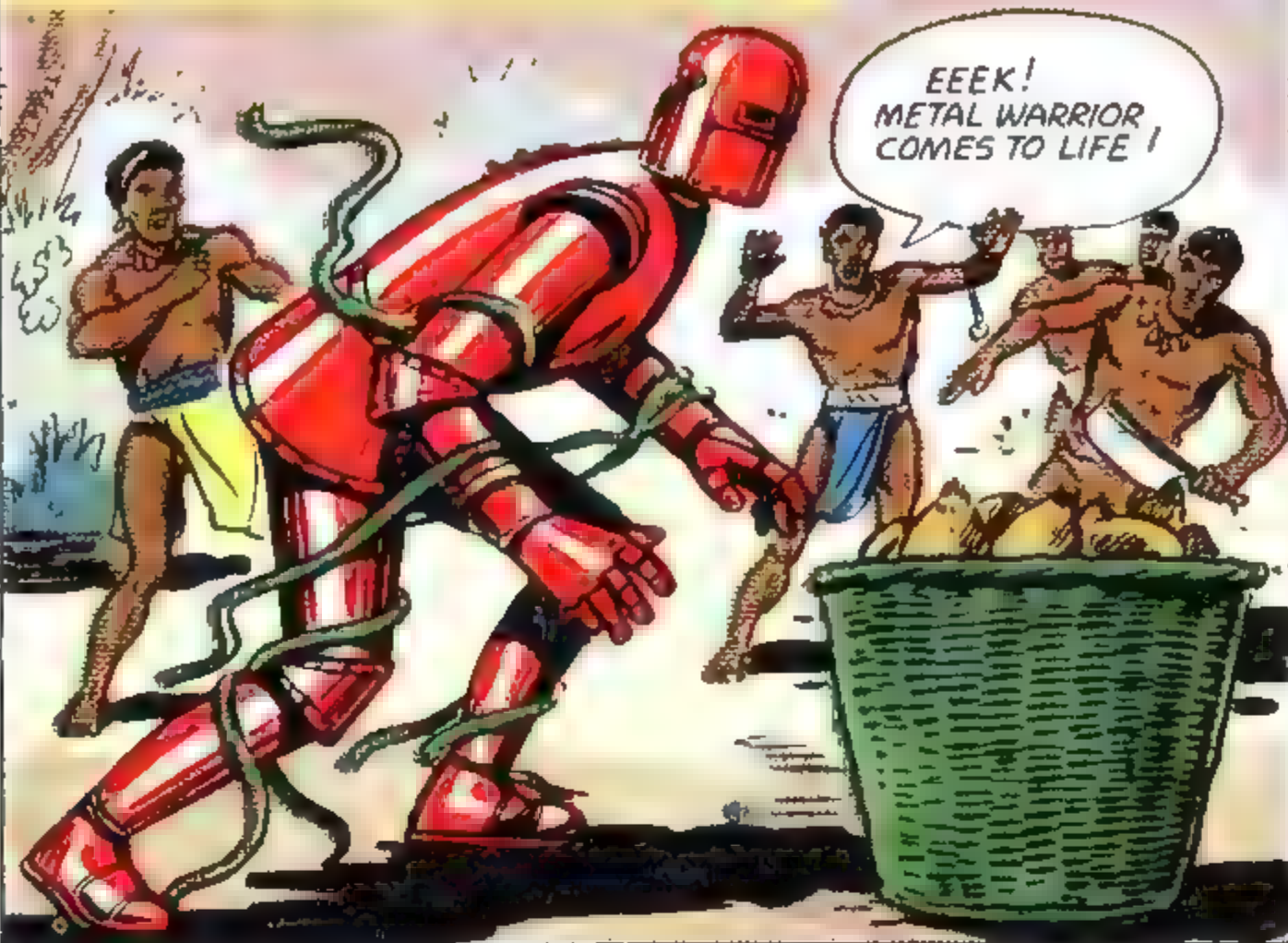
BUT SUDDENLY HE HIT ON A POSSIBLE WAY OUT OF HIS DILEMMA

PERHAPS I CAN REACH THE PANEL ON HIS BACK WITH THIS SPEAR

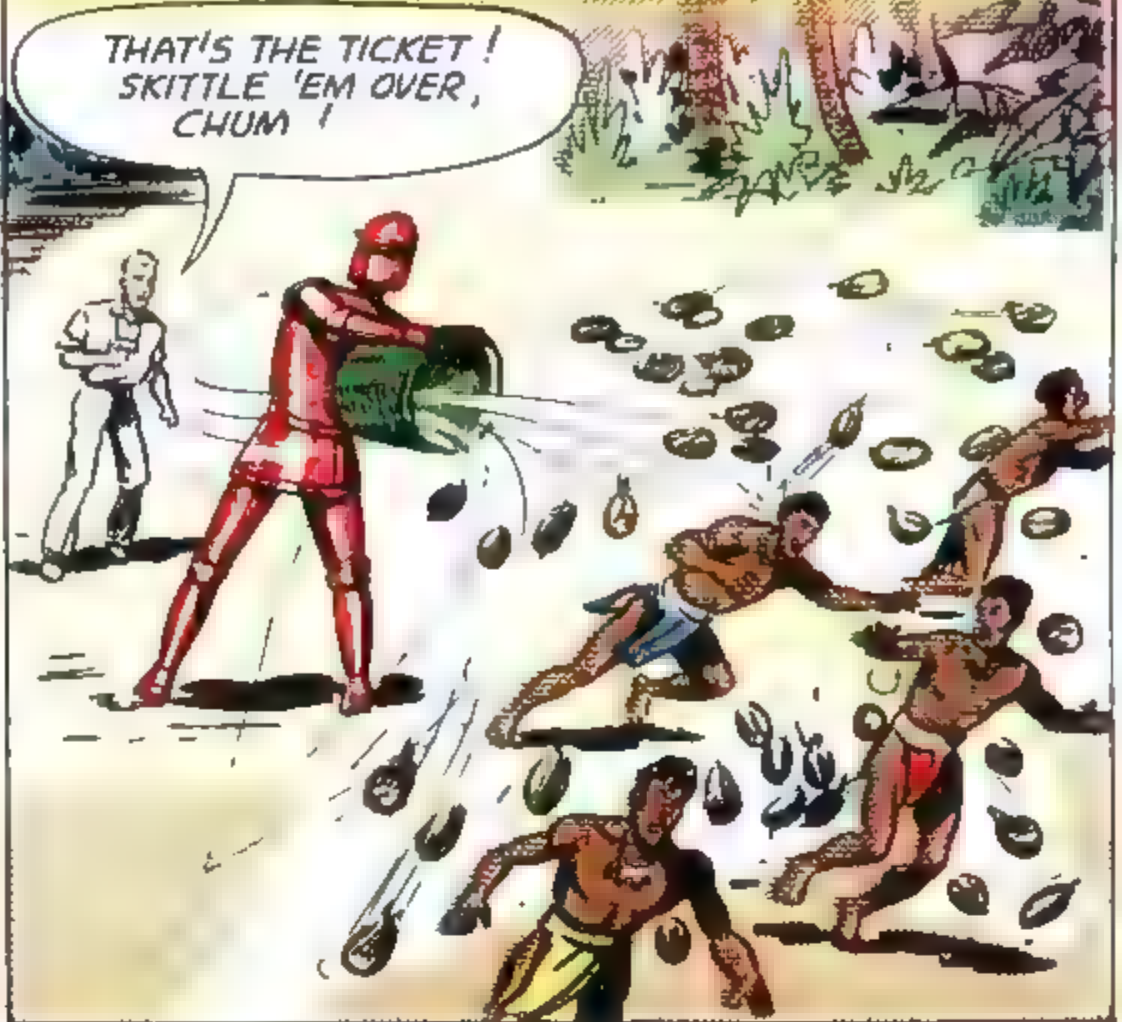
TED STRETCHED OUT THE WEAPON AND THRUST IT AT THE PUSH-BUTTON MASTER-SWITCH

I'VE MADE IT !

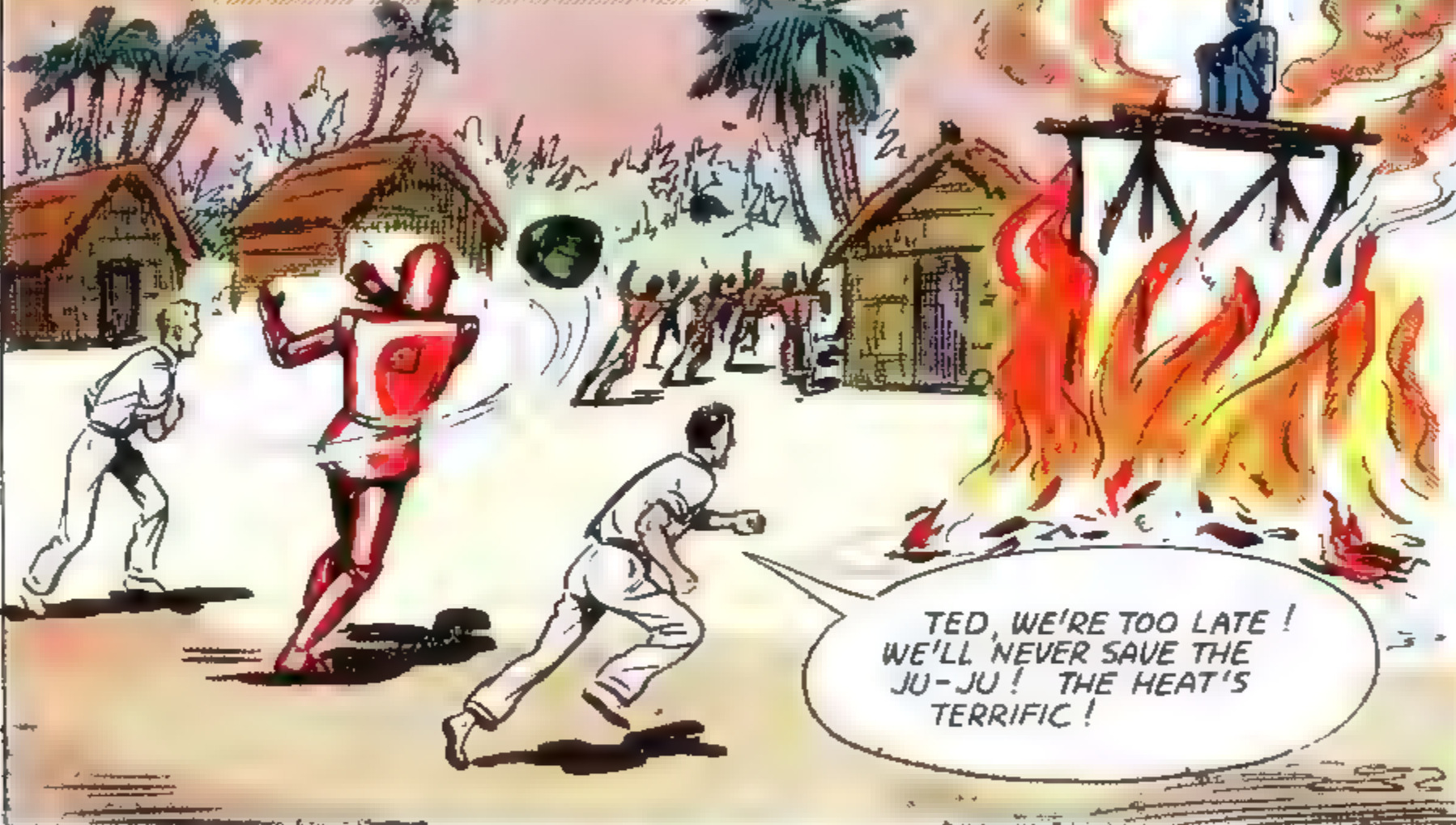
AGAIN POWER SURGED THROUGH THE ROBOT. HE BURST HIS BONDS AS IF THEY WERE COTTON AND BOUNDED UP



SKILFULLY TED OPERATED THE TRANSMITTER, CAUSING ARCHIE TO SHOWER THE NATIVES WITH COCONUTS



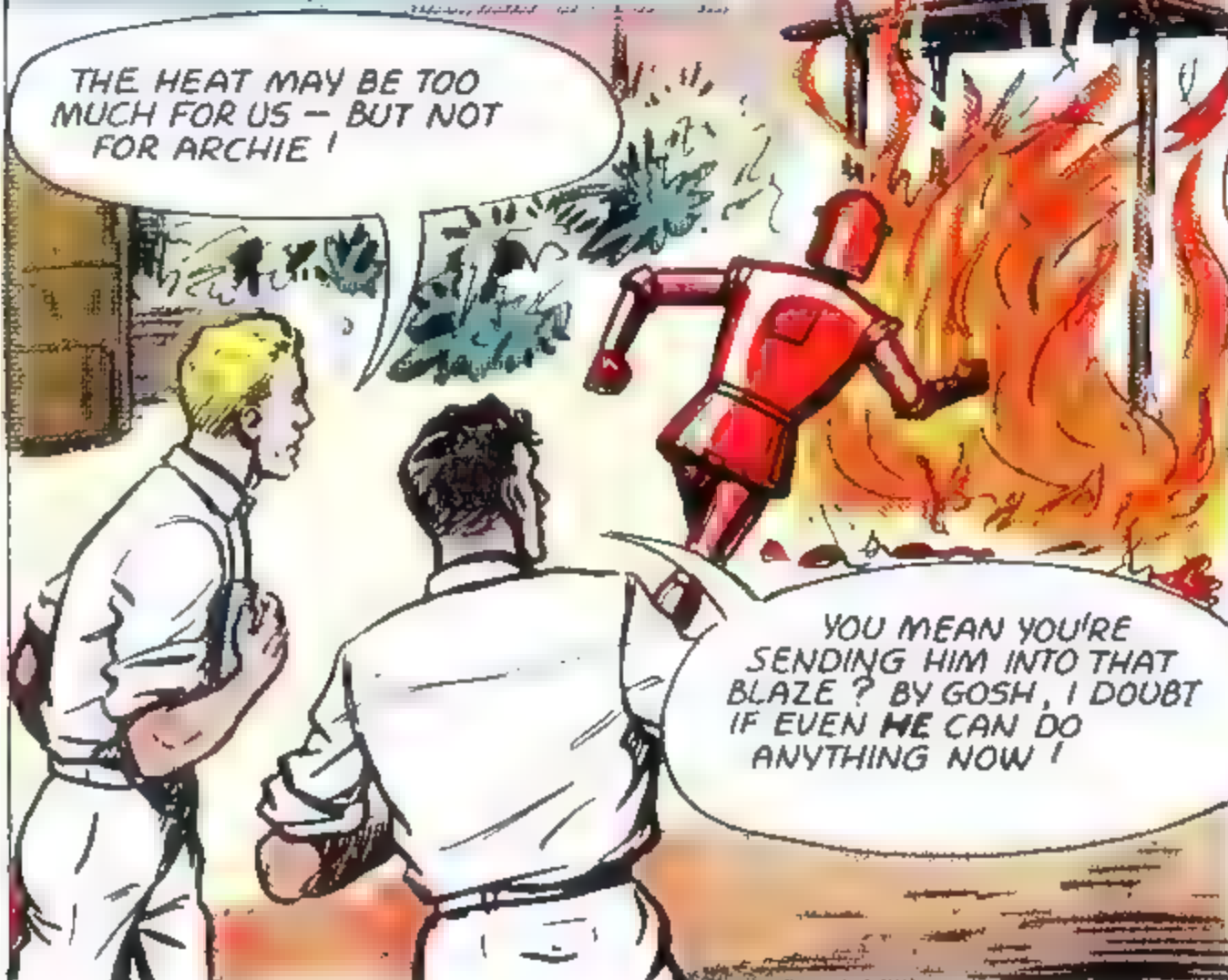
PANIC - STRICKEN, THE TRIBE TOOK TO ITS HEELS. BUT KEN DARTED FORWARD IN DESPAIR



A SEARING INFERNO OF FLAME ALREADY THREATENED THE IDOL



TED, HOWEVER, STILL FELT CONFIDENT

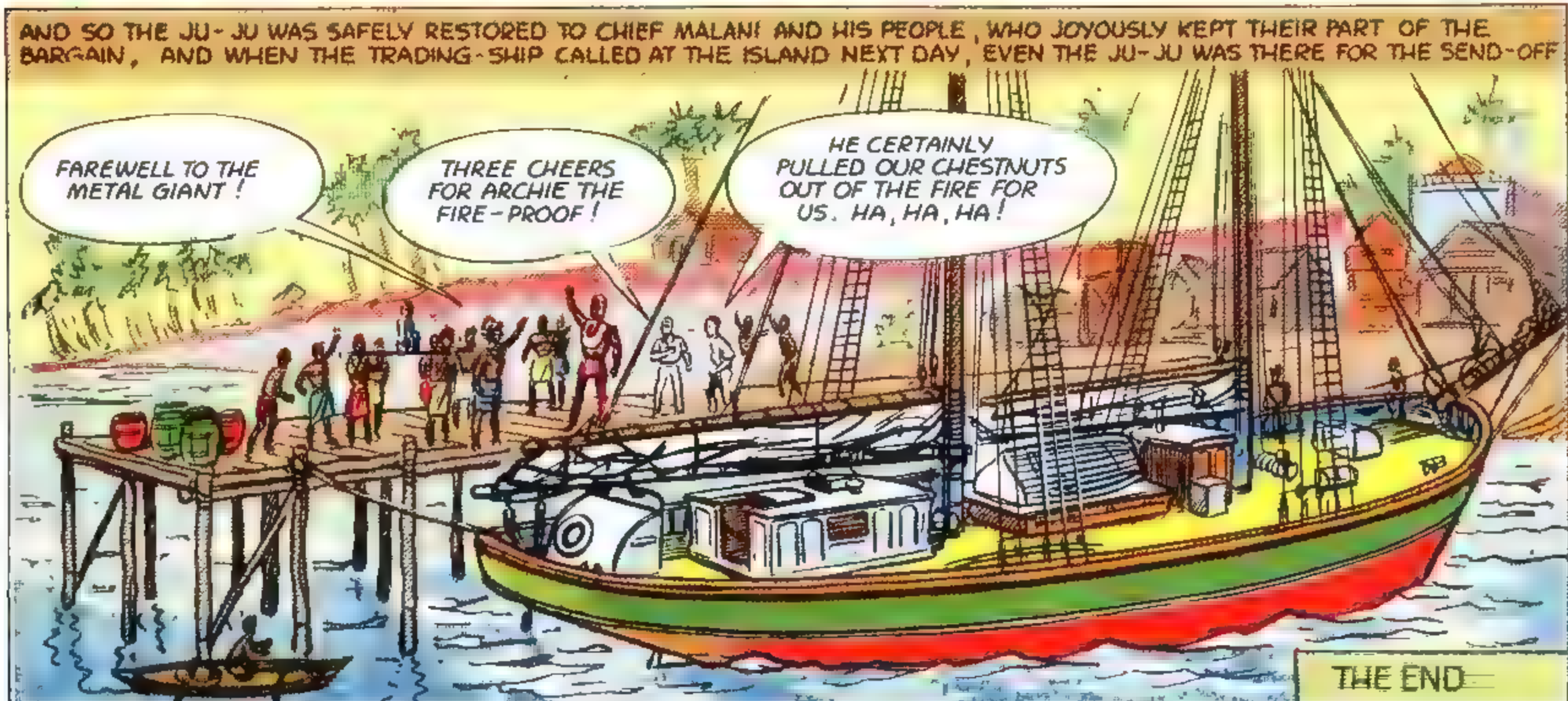
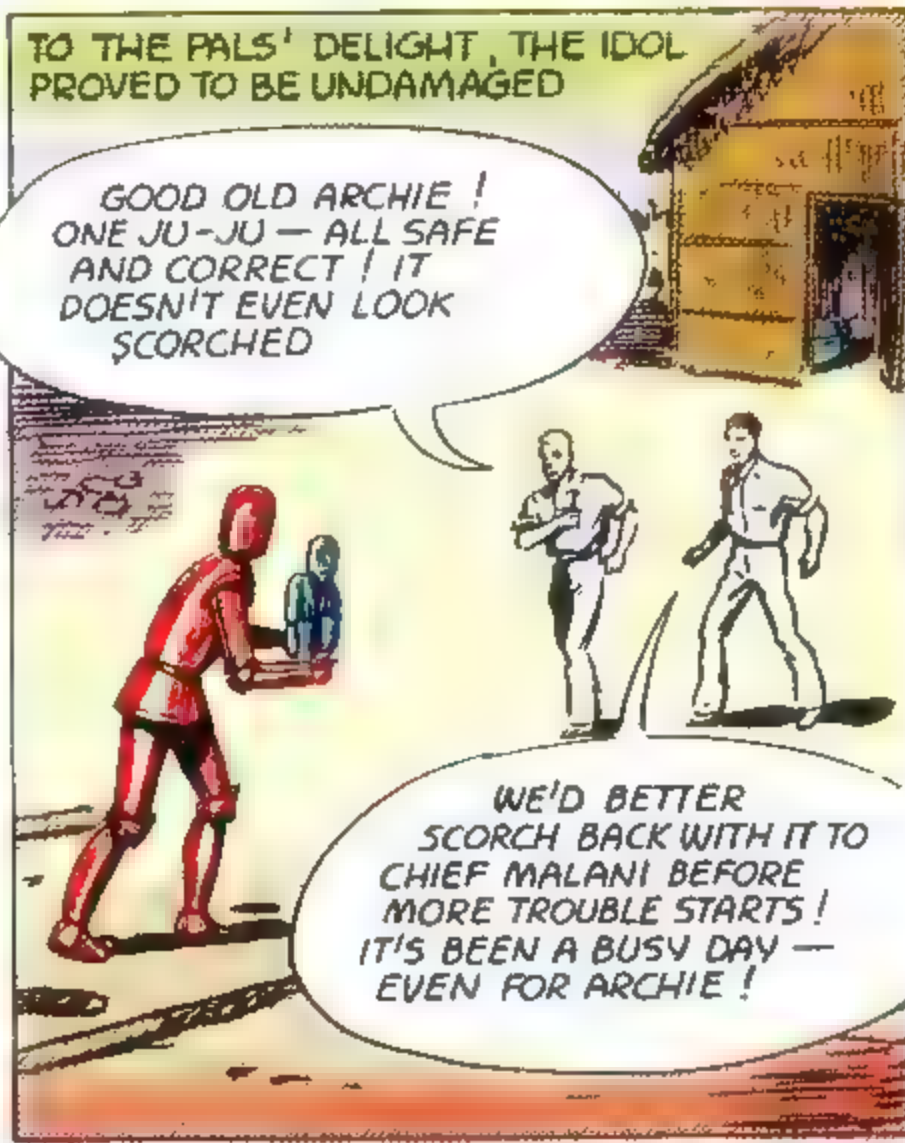
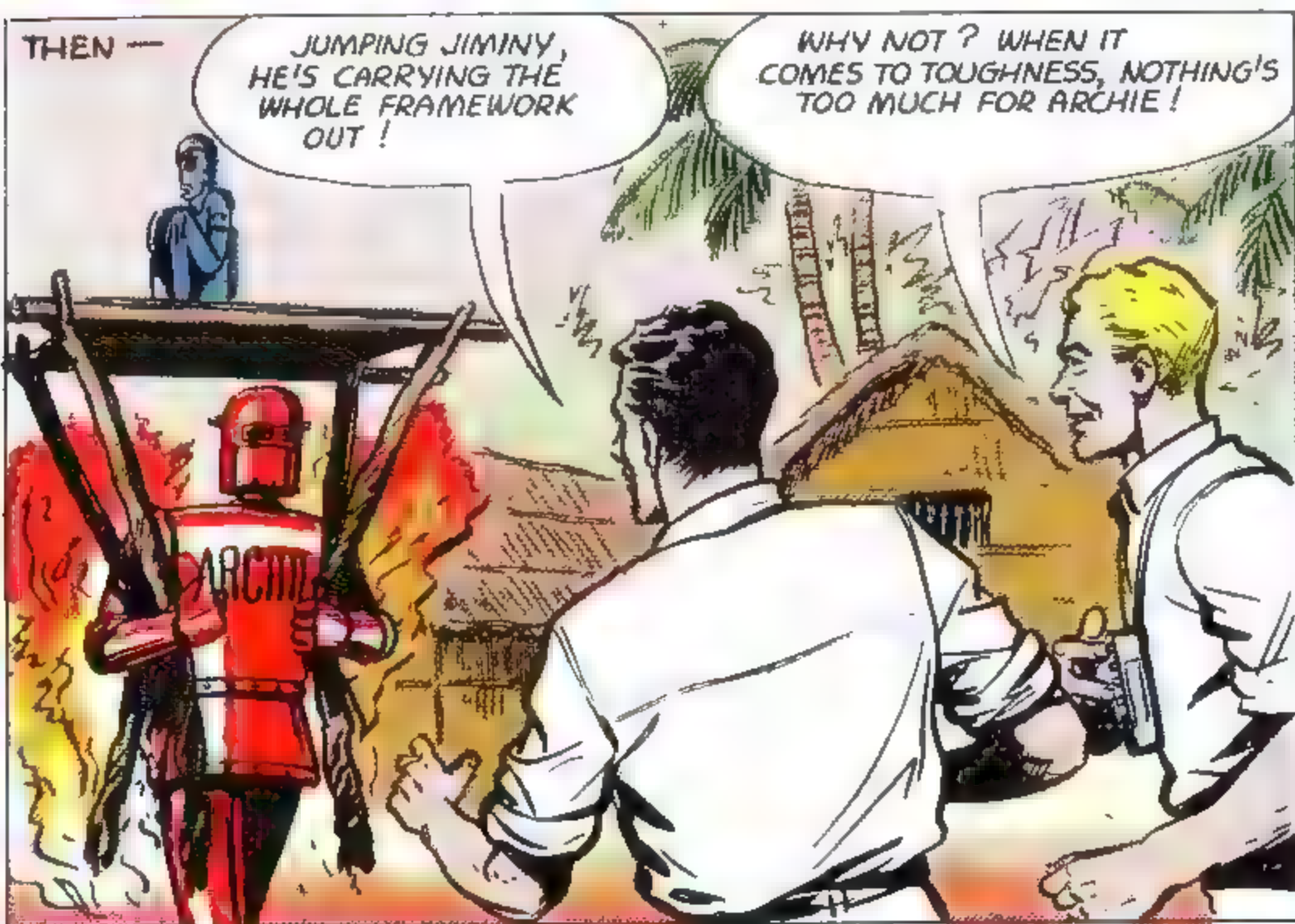


ARCHIE PLUNGED THROUGH FLAME AND SMOKE





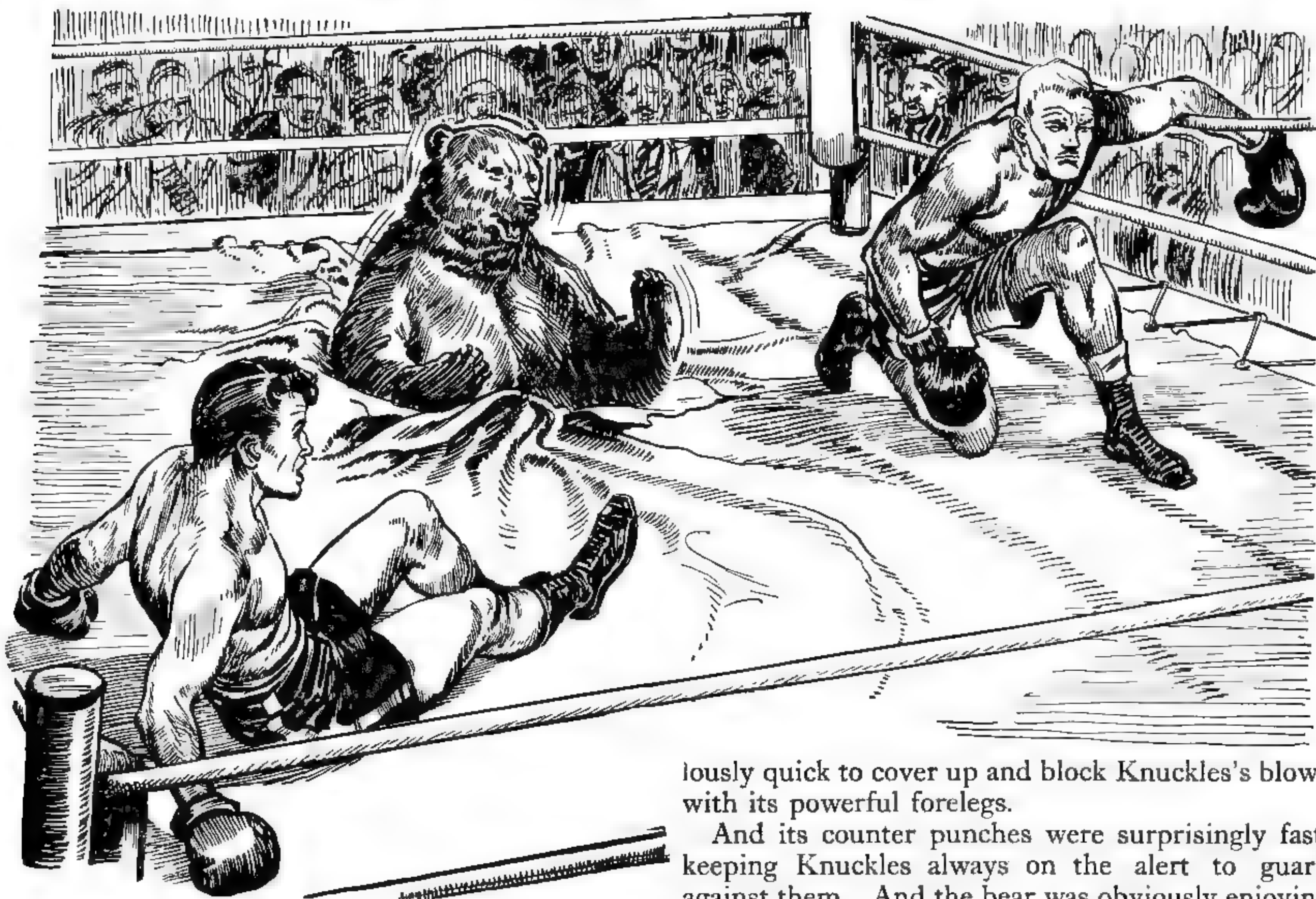
THE ROBOT STRETCHED HIS MASSIVE ARMS AROUND THE WHOLE FRAMEWORK SUPPORTING THE JU-JU



THE END

KNUCKLES NIXON'S *BOXING BEAR*

BY RAY MARR



THE BEAR THAT BOXED FOR BISCUITS!

BANG-woof-Thud-woof-smack . . . Strange were the sounds that came from the clearing in front of the cabin of Knuckles Nixon, the young backwoods boxer and trapper. Mingled with the thud and smack of boxing gloves were deep-chested grunts and growls.

But stranger still was the scene.

For Knuckles Nixon was training. Stripped to his ring rig, with his boxing gloves on, Knuckles was sparring.

And his sparring partner was a grizzly bear!

Reared high on its legs, it launched great, swinging blows at the young boxer. The animal's paws were enclosed in home-made gloves.

Round and round they circled, Knuckles darting in with dazzling lefts and rights, the bear replying with its massive swings or tremendously powerful uppercuts and jabs.

Fantastic though it seemed, it was an even enough contest. Knuckles was far faster on his feet, for the bear was clumsy on its hind legs. But it was marvel-

lously quick to cover up and block Knuckles's blows with its powerful forelegs.

And its counter punches were surprisingly fast, keeping Knuckles always on the alert to guard against them. And the bear was obviously enjoying itself.

"Dong!"

The clang of a stick on a syrup tin signalled the end of the round. The bear dropped to all fours and trotted over to Night Owl, Knuckles' Indian partner, who threw it a sweet biscuit.

"I not know," grinned the Indian, "if Balzo like boxing or eating more."

"He's mighty good at both," Knuckles chuckled. "I reckon saving him off that ice floe was the best thing I ever did. I'd never get a sparring partner like him."

The young trapper, at tremendous risk, had saved the bear when it seemed that it was going to be carried out to sea. And the bear, which Night Owl had named Balzo—the Smiter—had adopted the two pals. Knuckles had decided to train it as his sparring partner.

"He's certainly been one mighty big help," Knuckles went on. "I reckon I'm fitter now—thanks to sparring—than I've ever been . . . and by the Great Caribou I need to be if I'm to have a chance against Roughneck Wilson."

The Trapper with the Most Amazing Sparring Partner in the Backwoods

Knuckles had been training for weeks for his fight with Roughneck Wilson, champion of the loggers, and he knew it would be the stiffest contest of his life. For Roughneck had a reputation for iron strength that allowed him to go all out for the whole course of a fight.

Dong-dong !

Night Owl accidentally tapped the syrup tin gong. Balzo knew the signal for the start of another round and reared up at once, waving his paws. Unfortunately he bumped Night Owl and spilled the rest of the biscuits from the Indian's grasp. Balzo hesitated. Should he box or eat? Then greed won. Down on all fours he went, his big red tongue licking up the biscuits from the ground.

"Oh, gee," sighed Knuckles. "That looks like the end of training for today. We've got no more biscuits and Balzo is used to getting one as a reward at the end of every round. I wouldn't like him to be disappointed . . . sides, if he doesn't get his reward he might quit sparring."

He pulled off his gloves and headed at a quick trot down to the river where a hole in the ice was already broken. Knuckles never missed his daily dip.

Night Owl looked reprovingly at the bear as he pulled off its gloves.

"Now what you do?" he demanded. "You spoil Knuckles's training. Very silly bear. Too greedy. My people have saying: 'Greedy ones dig own trap with hungry teeth.'"

"Woof!" said Balzo as he lumbered off.

The biscuits had been nice. But they had just whetted his appetite. He seemed to remember a moose bone he had left in the forest!

* * *

On the day of the fight, the partners lured Balzo into the woodshed at the back of the cabin. There was dried grass there which would make a good bed for the bear. And there was enough food to last the beast for the three days while they would be away.

To make sure that Balzo didn't eat it all at once, Knuckles had frozen it into a great lump of ice and hung it from the ceiling. As the ice melted, the food would drop.

"It's kind of sad leaving him behind," sighed Knuckles as he shut the door. "But we can't take him into Fort Peter. With so many people about he could get into trouble."

"True words," the Indian agreed. "My people have saying: 'Man who takes whale to home need big bath.'"

Packs on their backs, snowshoes on their feet, the two pals headed for the settlement and Knuckles's big fight.

It was almost dusk when they reached it and they were startled to see everyone scattering before them, racing along the boardwalks, diving through the doors of stores, saloons and houses.

"Hey, did we meet a skunk on the way?" Knuckles demanded.

"Crack!"

A rifle bullet sang past his head almost as he spoke.

The partners dived for cover.

"They've all gone crazy!" Knuckles gasped.

Two more bullets followed. But they came nowhere close.

"Durn bad shots, whoever fired them!" Knuckles exclaimed.

Then there came a sound from behind.

"Woof!"

The partners spun round.

There, in the middle of the settlement street, stood Balzo.

And now they understood. The settlement folk thought Balzo was a wild grizzly. No wonder they were shooting.

"He break out from woodshed!" gasped Night Owl. "He follow us."

Knuckles did not answer. For across the street he saw a man taking deliberate aim at the grizzly. At that range he could hardly miss.

The young boxer's huge sparring partner seemed doomed!

ROUGHNECK WILSON'S VISITING CARD

THERE was no time to shout an explanation. Only action could save the bear. And instinctively Knuckles acted.

In one swift motion, he scooped up a handful of snow, formed a snowball and hurled it.

"Crack!"

The rifle went off. But the snowball had already hit the barrel, knocking it up.

Knuckles sprinted forward to Balzo's side.

"Don't shoot, folks," he shouted. "This is a tame bear . . ."

Balzo gave a relieved grunt and laid a friendly paw on Knuckles's shoulder. Marvelling, the townspeople came out of their hiding places.

"Well, if that don't beat all!" exclaimed a grizzled old prospector. "That there b'ar is just as friendly like it was a dawg."

Only the man with the rifle did not join the throng that gathered round the partners and the bear. His lean, angry face had darkened.

"Goshdurn it," he gritted. "I could've got fifty dollars for that bear's pelt if I'd got my shot off."

It did not matter to Ike Sladon that the bear was not his; that it was a well-loved pet. All he could think of was the money it would have meant.

The crowd accompanied Knuckles and the bear to the settlement inn where they were to stay the night. Lem Grass, the innkeeper, looked doubtfully at Balzo's huge shape.

"You ain't figuring to bring that here?" he asked. "Suppose it attacks one of my guests?"

"He's as gentle as a lamb," chuckled Knuckles. "But if you'd prefer it, he can stay in an outhouse for the night."

The innkeeper provided a huge meal of deer steaks for the bear and Knuckles saw him shut safely away. Only then did he attend to his own needs. He and Night Owl tucked into a hearty meal.

They were just finishing when a burly man of about Knuckles's own height strode into the room. For a moment he stared at Knuckles. Then he swung round to the door he had just closed. His fist clenched.

Then, with amazing speed, that fist jerked up.

"Crash!"

There was a splintering of wood and a gasp of awe from the others in the dining room.

The man had driven his fist clean through the solid, one inch thick door!

"That's my visiting card," he rasped. "Wilson's the name . . . they call me Roughneck."

Knuckles did not bat an eyelid. It was a trick he had seen before. It was not so much a matter of strength as of skill in hitting the wood fair and square. He knew why Wilson had done it. It was a "war of nerves" to make Knuckles worry about the fight.

"Glad to meet you, Wilson," grinned the young trapper. "Don't go, though. I'd like to give you MY visiting card . . ."

He rose lithely and snatched up a solid iron poker from the fireplace. Gripping its ends he put out all his strength in one quick burst.

The half inch iron bar bent double to the renewed gasps of the crowd.

Knuckles flicked it towards his opponent.

"Be seeing you," he grinned. "In the ring."

For a moment Wilson was shaken. Then a reluctant smile crossed his hard features as he looked down at the twisted iron.

"I guess I'm going to enjoy this fight," he said as he swung from the room.

"What strength!" gasped a man in awe as the door closed.

Knuckles shook his head.

"Not strength, knack," he said. "I learned the trick from a circus man one time. I'll bet there isn't a man in this room who couldn't do it . . . if he had the knack. But it looks tough."

Night Owl smiled a little to himself.

"My people have saying," he said. "'Man who wrestle with grizzly should have strong arms . . . or swift legs.' I think maybe Wilson not like fight so much as he say."

"Don't fool yourself," Knuckles answered. "That man's tough. I'm in for the fight of my life tomorrow . . . And to make sure I'm fit for it, I'm going

to hit the hay right now and get a good night's sleep."

But in this Knuckles was wrong.

The sky was still dark when he heard a thundering at his door.

"Nixon! Nixon! Wake up!" yelled Lem Grass the innkeeper.

"What's wrong?" Knuckles sleepily inquired.

"Everything's wrong!" the innkeeper retorted.

"That durn bear of yours has broken out . . . if you don't catch it right away I'll have it shot!"

SEARCHING FOR THE MIDNIGHT RAIDER

KNUCKLES sprang from his bed, wide awake. He rushed to the door, Night Owl behind him.

"Where is Balzo?" Knuckles demanded. "How did he get out?"

"Don't ask me," retorted the innkeeper with justifiable indignation. "All I know is I went down to my larder right now to get the grub out for the breakfasts . . . and that brute of yours had just about cleaned the larder out."

Grass spoke no more than the truth. The larder was a shambles. Tins of syrup and honey had been ripped open. Bags of sugar had been scattered. Joints of meat had been pulled down from their hooks and half eaten. Here and there huge pawmarks told that it was indeed all the work of a bear.

"Are you sure Balzo did all this?" Knuckles demanded. "Maybe a wild bear broke in . . ."

He darted outside towards the outhouse. But as he neared it, his heart sank. The outhouse door hung open.

"There you are!" snorted Grass. "That door's been smashed—and by your bear. Nixon . . . I'm holding you responsible for the damage. You'll have to pay . . . and if you don't get that bear under control it'll have to be shot."

He went stamping away into the inn, leaving Knuckles scratching his head in bewilderment as he looked at the door.

"It's durn funny," mused the young trapper. "I'm certain Balzo wouldn't break out—not in the middle of the night. Bears sleep at night. Something must have disturbed him."

Suddenly he peered closer at the door.

"Hey, Night Owl," he breathed. "What do you make of these marks?"

"Claw marks," said the Indian. "Where bear hit door to break open."

"Then why is the wood cut up here instead of down?" demanded Knuckles. "If Balzo hit the door his paws would have been moving down. These marks were made by something moving up . . . by a man, say, using a heavy-bladed knife. He'd hit high to make it look like the bear—but he'd be hitting the wrong way."

The Indian hissed his understanding. Suddenly he pounced on something in the snow.

"Screw from door hinge," he said. "And not pulled out. No wood sticking to threads. Someone unscrew . . ."

Knuckles's face was hard. Someone had tampered with that door to make it seem that the bear had broken out. But in fact Balzo had been deliberately released.

"Who do?" Night Owl asked.

"Only one person around here would have any reason to do anything against me," Knuckles answered. "And that's Roughneck Wilson . . . And yet I wouldn't have said he was that kind of a guy . . . Anyhow, for the moment it doesn't matter who did it. What we've got to do is to find Balzo."

In his mind was the memory of the proprietor's threats. If they did not find Balzo quickly the bear would be shot.

It was simple enough to find the bear's tracks leading from the outhouse to the inn larder. It was then that the trouble started. Balzo had left by the window and not by the larder door. Outside the snow was hard-packed and took no tracks.

Carefully though they scanned the ground, there was just nothing to see. Anxiously the two partners

moved up and down, going even as far as the settlement's square where the boxing ring had been set up in readiness for the fight. But there was simply no trace of Balzo.

"I reckon he's holed up somewhere," Knuckles murmured. "He must be so full of grub by now that all he'll want to do is sleep. I just hope he stays in whatever dark corner he's found until we can pick him up."

Useless though it seemed, they continued their search until dawning day broke over the township.

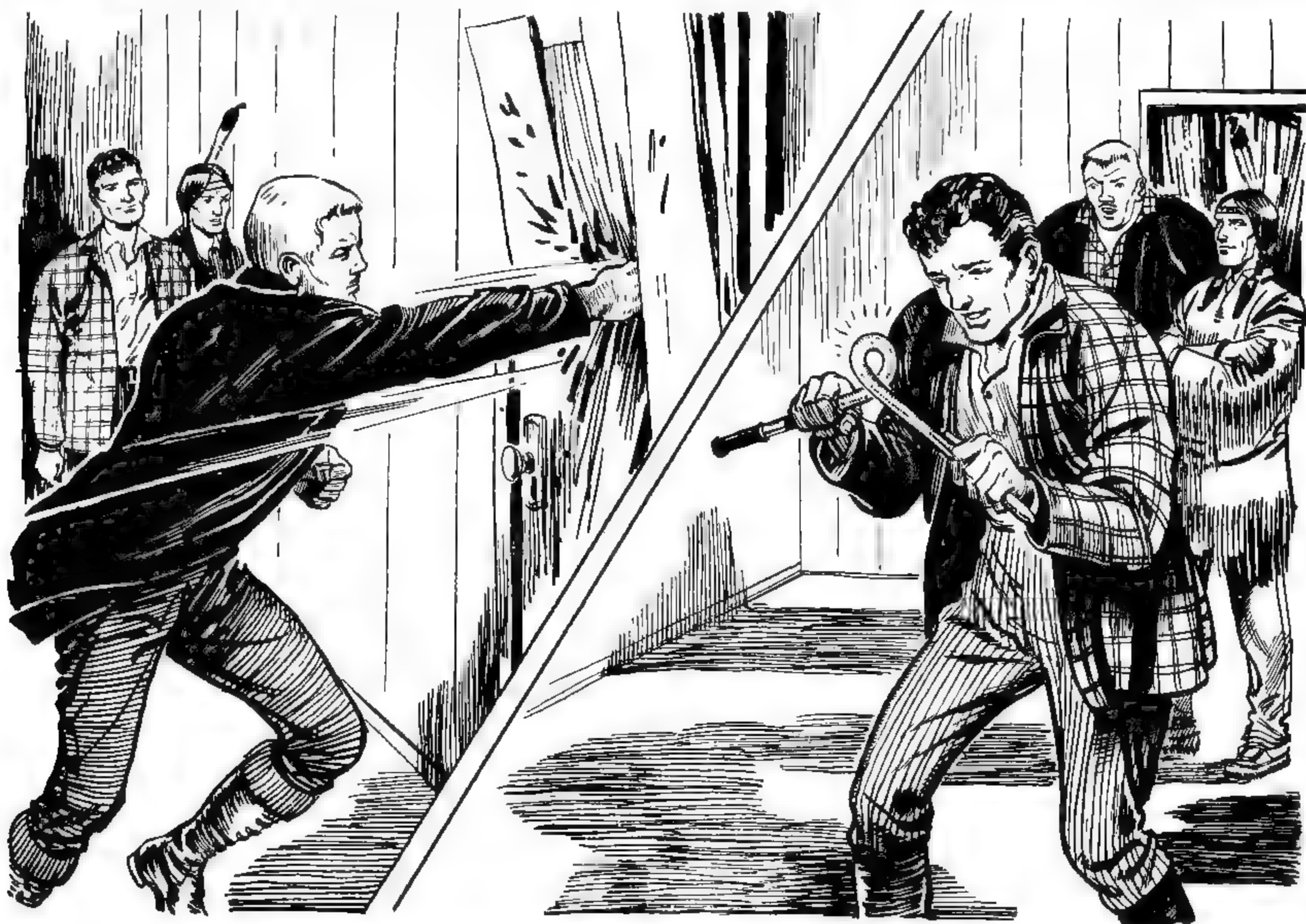
"I'll keep searching," Knuckles told his partner. "You go and get your breakfast. When you've finished you can take over while I eat."

Up and down he went, peering into alleys, craning over walls, searching, searching. And while he searched he was wondering furiously who had freed the bear.

"It must have been Wilson," he decided. "He's the only one with anything to gain. He'd reckon on me searching like this, losing my sleep, getting tired so I'll not be on top form for the fight."

He did not know that he was not the only searcher, that Ike Sladon, rifle in hand, was also searching the settlement, his dark face twisted in anger.

"That durn bear," Sladon fumed as he searched.



Roughneck Wilson proved his toughness by punching a hole in the door. But Knuckles Nixon wasn't scared. He calmly picked up a poker and bent it double as a sign of his own strength!

"It shoulda been dead by now—a certain fifty dollars in my pocket . . . But it fooled me."

For it had been Sladon who had freed the bear. He did not dare to shoot it in the outhouse, for everyone in the town knew it was there and there could be no excuse for such a slaughter.

But after he had opened the door, he had laid a trail of sweet things to the inn larder. His plan was to shoot Balzo as the bear left. He would claim that he had heard strange sounds and had come to investigate. Seeing a bear creating havoc, it would have been natural for him to shoot. No one would blame him. In fact everyone would be grateful. He would even be able to claim the skin for he knew Knuckles would never think of taking the fur of an animal that had been a pet.

It was a cunning plot and it might even have made him something of a hero in the town—but for one thing.

Balzo had not left by the door to make a convenient target. Instead—perhaps sensing the danger that lay that way—the bear had clambered through the window . . .

All through the day Knuckles and Night Owl searched for Balzo without success. Only when the time for the fight drew near did Knuckles give up.

"You keep looking, Night Owl," he said. "I'll have to get ready. But I reckon Balzo must have lit out for the woods. If he was in town we'd surely have found him by now . . . I just hope he stays hidden till we do find him."

Only when he began to change did Knuckles realise how tired he was. He had lost a lot of sleep. He had spent the whole day on the move. He was a little dispirited by the loss of his pet. Only one thing was in his favour. A burning anger blazed in his heart at Wilson, whom he blamed for Balzo's disappearance.

Fort Peter had never been so crowded. The whole square round the ring was packed with loggers, trappers and miners from the district. The loggers, naturally, were cheering for Wilson. Of the others the trappers were for their fellow hunter, Knuckles. Some of the miners supported him, and some the logger.

Knuckles's face was hard and set as he clambered into the ring and eyed his opponent.

"You're going to pay for getting Balzo into all this trouble," he promised silently.

The boxers looked evenly matched as they shook hands. Wilson was the more heavily muscled, square-built, indestructible seeming. But in Knuckles's lithe body and rippling muscles there was the promise of greater speed.

"Dong!"

The bell rang for the first round. From the raised ring—built up of a log base with the canvas stretched tight over the top of thin planks—Knuckles could

see over the crowd. Night Owl was still searching for the bear.

Then Knuckles had no time to think of or look at anything but his opponent. The fight was on!

BALZO MAKES A COME-BACK

ROUGHNECK Wilson came wading in, body a little crouched, his stance practically square to Knuckles so that he could throw punches with either hand.

And throw punches is what he did. They came flashing at Knuckles from every side, delivered with tremendous speed and force. The young trapper was forced backwards, jabbing out a long left in a desperate attempt to keep the other at a distance. Again and again that stabbing left landed in Wilson's face.

It might as well have been a feather duster!

Forced on the retreat, Knuckles was not getting his full strength behind the blows. Wilson did not even bother to duck them.

And desperately though Knuckles ducked, blocked and swayed, some of his opponent's punches were getting through. They hurt.

Knuckles was worried as the round ended.

"It's no good trying to box a man like that," he muttered. "I'll have to go in and fight."

And from the very start of the second round, that was what he did. There was a storm of cheering from the tremendously excited crowd as the two boxers stood toe to toe, slamming in punches with a rattle like machine guns.

It was Wilson who gave way first. Not that he was backing down. But the sheer fury of Knuckles's attack was driving him back.

Thud-thud-thud.

Three body blows had the logger staggering. His jaw was open. Knuckles started a punch which could have finished the fight then and there.

But the blow was never delivered.

For just as Knuckles started to punch, the canvas seemed to shift under him. He was thrown off balance.

Wilson saw his chance, and as Knuckles staggered he sprang in with a tremendous swinging right that exploded on the side of Knuckles's head.

Knuckles never felt his body hit the canvas. The next thing he knew was the sound of counting.

"Six . . . seven . . . eight . . ."

"Got to get up," he gritted.

The loggers were still cheering what seemed certain victory for their champion when Knuckles, swaying, reached his feet again. Wilson came in like a tiger to finish him off.

Boxing instinctively, his head clearing all the time, Knuckles covered up and went on the defensive. Part of his mind was working on another problem. What had made the canvas seem to move under him?

Was it the effect of the pounding he had had? Was it another of Wilson's tricks?

The round ended with Knuckles still on the defensive, taking a dreadful beating from the logger.

"This can't go on," gritted the young trapper as he waited for the third round. "I can't stand up under his attack much more. I'll have to go for a knock-out."

The same thought seemed to be in Wilson's mind. Both boxers came out of their corners with a rush at the sound of the gong.

"Dong!"

Wilson led with his left at Knuckles's body. The young trapper made no attempt to duck the blow. This was one he would have to take.

And as he took it, his own right was swinging hard above Wilson's careless guard. It was a perfectly timed blow that took Wilson full on the point of the jaw. The logger's eyes glazed, and even as he fell Knuckles knew he was out. There was no need for the count that followed. Knuckles's heart sang.

"I've won!" he thought.

But with the thought, he felt himself falling. It was a strange feeling. His mind was quite alert and yet his legs seemed unable to keep him up. The ring seemed to be rising under his feet. Had that blow which he had taken knocked him out too? Would the fight end in a fantastic draw with both men out?

Cr-u-unch—Ri-ip.

The sound of splintering wood and ripping canvas drowned the thud of Knuckles's body. But as he fell the young trapper twisted round.

Appearing through the canvas of the ring just where his feet had been an instant before was a great, shaggy head!

"Balzo!" gasped Knuckles.

Now at last he knew where the bear had been hiding. Beneath the ring was one place where Knuckles had never dreamed of looking. It had been the bear's head, forcing upwards, which had made Knuckles fall.

The whole ring seemed to shatter as the bear hoisted its vast body up and reared on its hind legs.

"Woof!" it grunted, throwing up its paws in boxing stance.

"By the Great Caribou!" gasped Knuckles. "It must have heard the gong. It thinks this is another sparring practice!"

Wilson was just heaving himself to his feet, shaking his head to clear it.

Over the tumult of the crowd, Knuckles heard a shrill cry. It was Night Owl!

"Look out!"

Over the heads of the crowd, Knuckles saw a rifle barrel pointing at the bear.

Ike Sladon was grasping one last chance of collecting the money for the bearskin. If he shot the animal now, he could claim that he thought it was going to attack the boxers. And most of the spectators, seeing that menacing figure, would believe him.

As Knuckles saw his pet's danger, he realised with horror there was nothing he could do. He was too far from the bear to shoulder it out of danger's way. And there was no hope of Night Owl reaching Sladon.

Help came from a strange quarter. Wilson, still dazed after his knock-out, saw a looming figure ahead. Instinctively, thinking it to be Knuckles, he plunged in, fists slamming.

But the figure he had seen was Balzo.

The blows struck home and drove Balzo back. Crack!

A rifle bullet sang past the bear's head. But for Wilson it would have been dead.

Then Knuckles sprang forward.

"Down, Balzo, down," he cried.

At the same time Wilson's friends had grabbed the logging boxer.

Out of the wild confusion order came at last. Knuckles led a baffled bear from the ring—to meet Night Owl dragging Ike Sladon forward.

"See what this man have," growled the Indian, holding out a broad-bladed knife. "I think this knife make marks in outhouse door."

Sladon was too shattered by the failure of his plan to make any denials. He confessed how he had freed the bear so that he could shoot it on the pretext of believing it was a wild one.

"Then you're responsible for the damage to my larder," snapped the innkeeper. "You'll pay, Sladon—if you have to wash dishes in my kitchen for a year."

Knuckles looked round for Wilson, the man whom—in his mind—he had accused so unjustly.

"I guess I thought you let Balzo out," he said. "And Balzo certainly interfered with that fight. . . . Do you want to start again?"

Roughneck Wilson laughed through battered lips.

"You beat me fair and square," he said. "And as for fighting you again . . ."

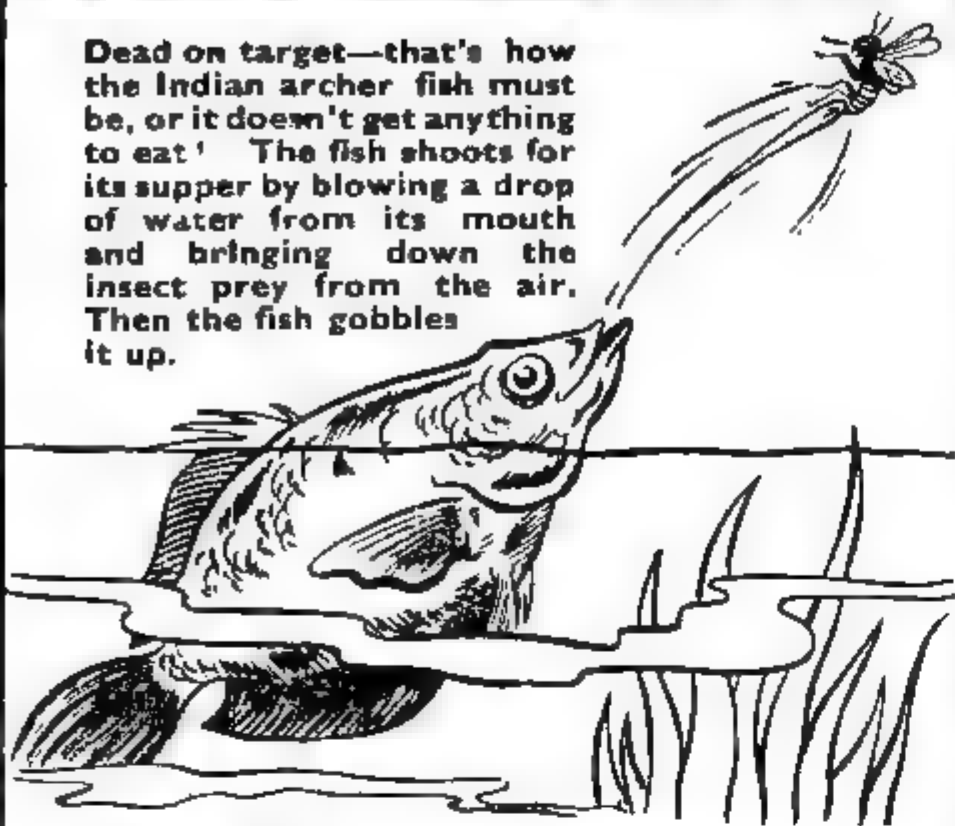
He shuddered.

"I'd sooner go into the ring with your bear" he said.

THE END

THEY SOUND FISHY— BUT THEY'RE FACTS!

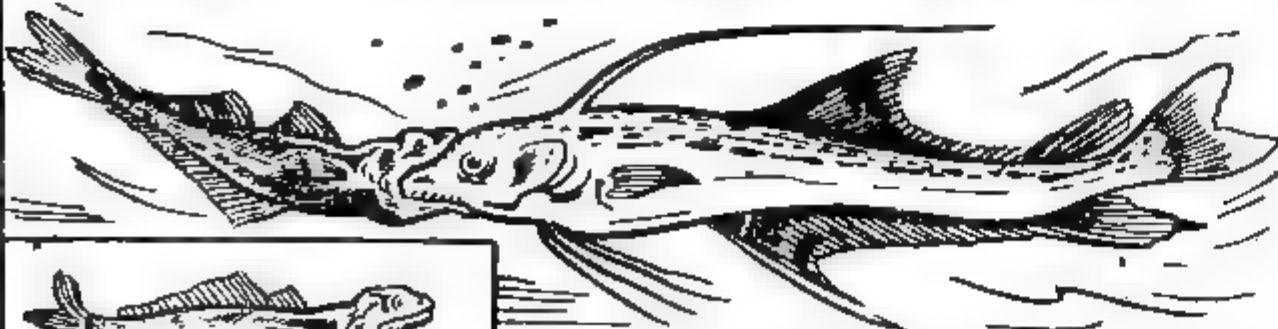
Dead on target—that's how the Indian archer fish must be, or it doesn't get anything to eat! The fish shoots for its supper by blowing a drop of water from its mouth and bringing down the insect prey from the air. Then the fish gobbles it up.



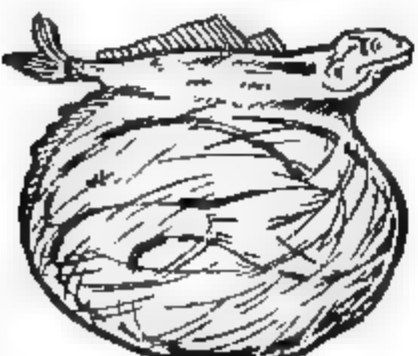
No, you're not seeing things! There are fish in parts of Africa and Asia which, with the help of their fins, can move quite nimbly on dry land. They even climb trees in search of food.



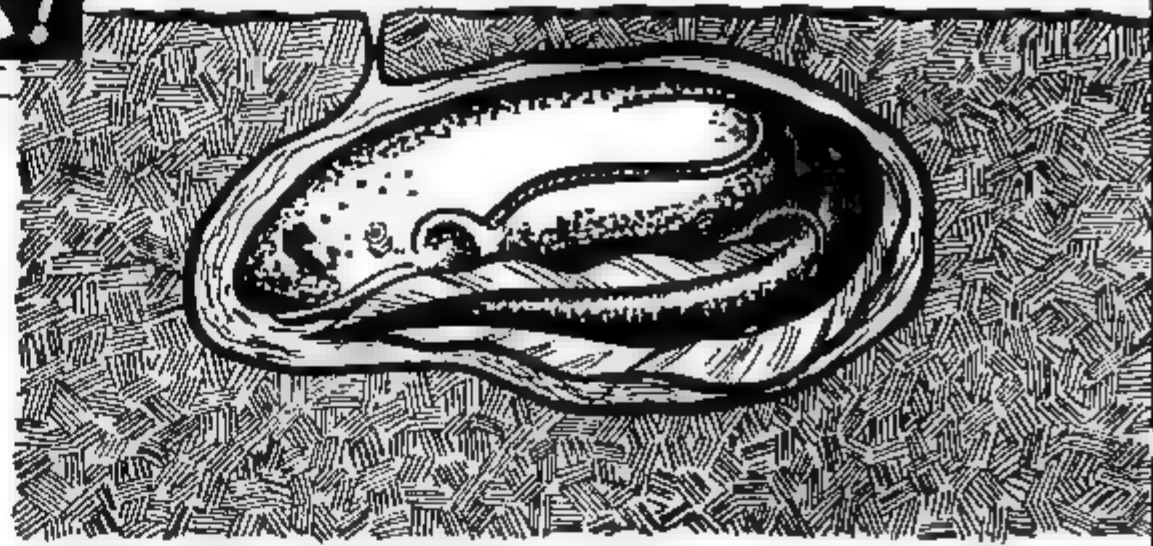
(Above).—The remora, or sucking fish, is an underwater hitchhiker. On the top of its head is a large sucker (inset). When it wishes to visit new feeding grounds, the remora just attaches itself by means of the sucker to a large shark and is towed there.



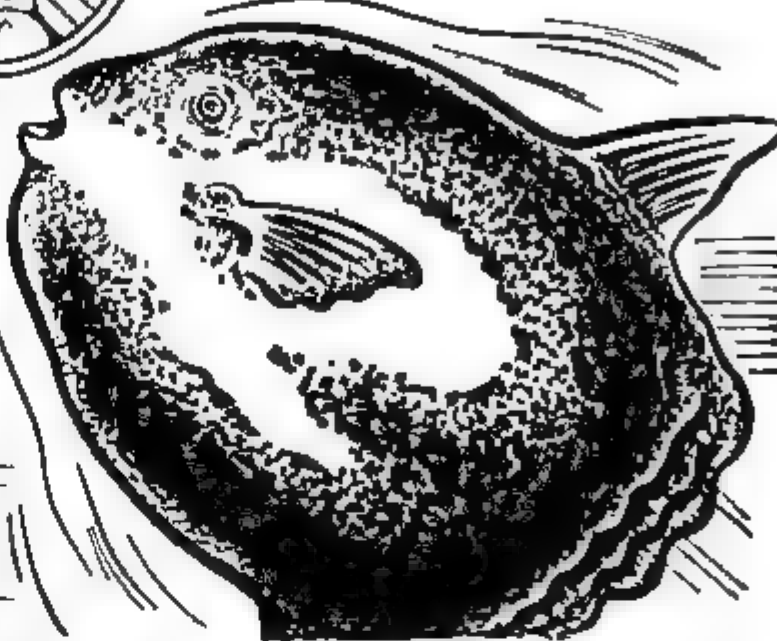
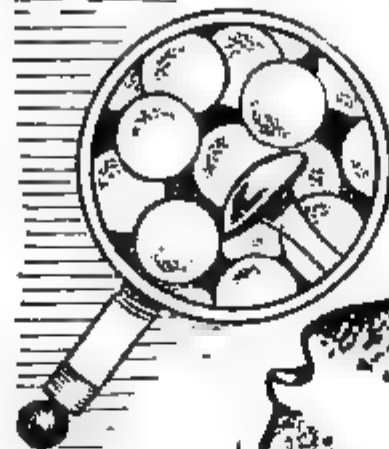
A little fellow with a big appetite is the black swallower fish. It can make a meal of another denizen of the deep three times its own size. You see it has an extending stomach!



(Below).—Here's a fish out of water—and he doesn't mind one bit! When the watery home of the African lung fish dries up, it just burrows into the mud at the bottom. It then settles down to sleep until the rains come again.



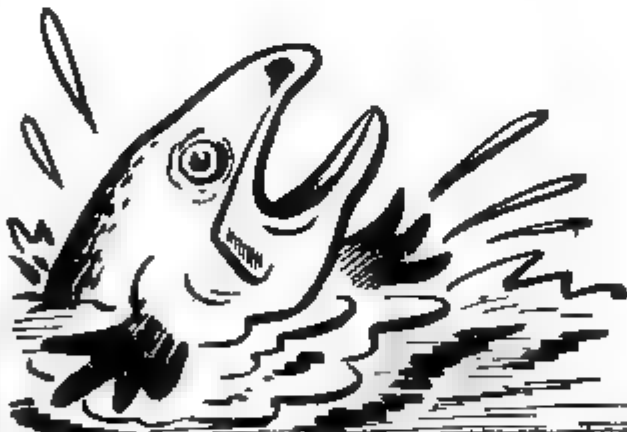
(Left).—Who'd think that this five-ton fish grew from a tiny egg the size of a pinhead (inset)? Well, it's true! By the time it reaches maturity, the giant ocean sunfish has swollen to thousands of times its size at birth.



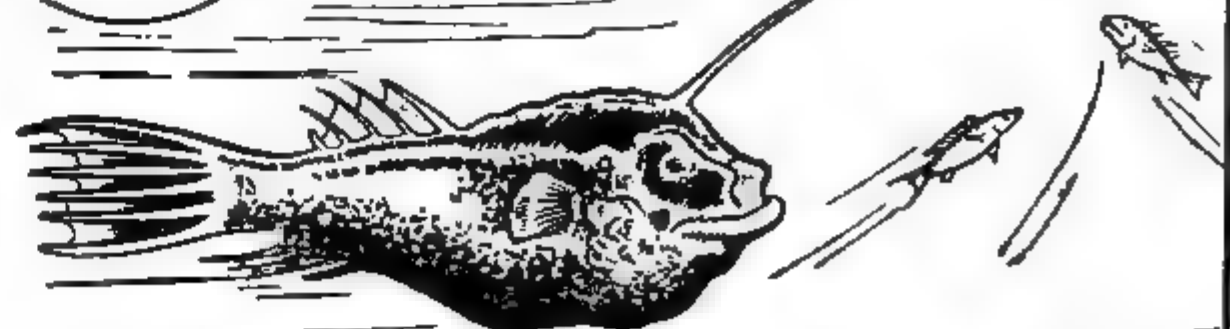
(Below).—It may not hail halibut—but it can rain fish! In countries subjected to cyclones, the whirling winds sometimes scoop water from the surface of lakes and rivers, and with it—fish. When the wind dies, the finny fliers flop down.



(Left).—Even a fish can drown! This has happened in the United States, where most of the oxygen in the water of a lake was used up by masses of decaying vegetation. Fish breathe oxygen from water by means of their gills. When the supply is used up, they just drown.



The female angler fish likes to do a little fishing herself. She has a long, rod-like spine extending from her head. At the end of this is a small flap of skin which waves in the water and attracts the smaller fry. Too late, they discover this is not really a succulent insect but a snare.





DAVE'S

Revealed by
TOM STIRLING

DIARY

WEDNESDAY.

I SUPPOSE women can't be expected to have the same iron nerves that a chap has. All the same, I was a bit surprised this evening at tea-time when I heard Mum come running up the garden path, and hammer on the door.

I had just put the kettle on for tea, and had taken it off again to put some water in when I heard the knocking. I rushed down the passage, and whipped open the door.

There stood Mum with a shopping basket, hand to forehead and looking as if she were about to faint.

"Gosh! What's wrong, Mum?" I gasped.

"Oh, dear. Let me in," she said. "And take the basket, Dave—"

She sat down on the hall chair and panted for breath.

"Are you ill, Mum?" I asked in concern. "Want me to ring the doctor?"

"Oh, dear! No, Dave. I'll be all right. I-I've had a fright," she replied. "Have you put the kettle on . . . I desperately need a cup of tea."

I rushed out to the kitchen, and remembered I hadn't put the water in the kettle after all. Pity I didn't realize it would be hotter than usual; the handle was scorching. But the cold water cooled it and sent up some pretty fierce steam.

"Won't be a minute, Mum," I said.

But she came into the kitchen and made the tea herself. Worrying about what the smell of hot metal was seemed to pull her round.

"Tell me what happened," I said.

"Happened . . . oh . . . I took a short cut," she began, and shuddered. "I went past that haunted house down the side lane. I had such a scare I ran all the way home. Never in all my life have I been so terrified."

Of course I was interested at once.

"You mean the house with the hole in the roof, Mum?" I exclaimed. "Is it really haunted?"

"It certainly is," she declared. "I used to pooh-pooh the idea—but never again. As I passed it, I saw an odd, whitish shape—and I distinctly heard the jingle of chains . . . Ugh!"

Of course I wanted to hear more; but she decided not to tell me; thought I might be scared. Far from it, though. I was just interested. No haunted house could scare me. To be scared you have to believe in ghosts, and I don't. After all, I'm a modern chap. Ghosts and rockets to the moon don't mix, so to speak.

However, I knew she'd tell Dad the full details, so I took care to slide into the room when she was telling him.

"Oh, come off it, Mum," grinned Dad. "It's just your imagination."

"Nothing of the sort! I'd like to see you walk past there without becoming scared!" she sniffed.

"Okay! Let's go for a walk now," said Dad. "Quite a nice night. I could do with a stroll."

As Mum hesitated I stepped forward

"I'll come, Dad," I said eagerly.

"You've got home-work to do, and I don't want to give you an excuse for not doing it," Dad replied with a chuckle. "But, seriously," he added to Mum, "you don't mean you really thought you saw a ghost—"

"I know what I saw," snapped Mum huffily, "and what I heard. If I don't know the sound of a jingling chain at my age, I should have my head examined."

"More practical to examine the garden of that house," retorted Dad. "There was probably a cow roaming around it with a chain round its neck or something of the sort—or a chained-up door

The Inside Story of a Hectic Ghost-Hunt in a "Haunted" House!

blowing to and fro in the wind. Haunted house? Ha, ha!"

Well, ha, ha! I suppose it is. But poor old Mum got quite cross, and made me beat it upstairs.

I think I must get my pal Alan Scott to look around that house with me.

THURSDAY.

GOING to school today, I told Alan about the haunted house.

"I can't imagine being scared by a haunted house myself," he said with a grin. "But I suppose women and girls are different."

"This afternoon's our big chance," I suggested. "No games . . . so we could explore the place."

Alan thought it a good idea.

"Might get some photographs of it," he said.

Then we agreed to keep quiet about it, because if a whole crowd of chaps went there, there could be trouble. It might easily be put out of bounds.

Matter of fact, it was once out of bounds after some windows there had been broken and our chaps got the blame. (We get the blame for most things. Some woman wrote to the local paper and said our chaps had been throwing gravel at her windows—only it proved to have been a hailstorm. The Head wrote quite a witty and sarcastic letter in reply.)

Unfortunately, as we were buying some things at the school tuckshop, Alf Jorkins edged near. He usually does when anyone's buying something; he's a cadging type I don't like much.

"Having a picnic?" he asked.

"Going out on our bikes," I said briefly.

"Sounds a good idea," nodded Alf. "I might join you. Where are you going? Better order some cold sausages. They add a nice touch."

"Who's stopping you?" I grinned.

"I was offering a suggestion for your picnic supplies," answered Alf in his hurt tone. "Don't think I'm butting in. I really came here to get a couple of buns, but . . ." He started patting his pockets.

"But you've left your money at home?" asked Alan. "Again?"

"Actually, yes," scowled Alf.

"Tough!" we said together.

He's got a good memory, Alf. Whenever he changes his trousers, he never forgets to take the money out of the pockets, if any, and leave it in the trousers he hangs up in the wardrobe.

"Well, come on—that's our lot," I told Alan.

Alf barred our way.

"Now don't be cagey," he urged. "My mother's baking a lovely plum cake. I can bring that along. And some lemon curd tarts that would make your mouth water. Where are you going?"

"Just around," I said.

"And about," added Alan.

"Good—I'll be along," nodded Alf.

Actually, I didn't expect him; but when I left home after dinner today, there he was.

"Thought I'd call for you, and save you the trouble of calling for me," he said. He had a haversack on his back. I was surprised. It had a nice bulge in it that could have been a plum cake and some lemon curd tarts.

When a chap decides to attach himself, it's pretty hard to get rid of him. So I just said nothing, and Alf tailed me to Alan's house.

Alan opened the door, and in a whisper I told him that Alf was waiting at the gate.

For a minute or two, Alan looked livid; then he winked.

"We'll fix him," he said. "Take your bike down the back garden. We can get over the fence and into the lane."

I felt a bit guilty in a way; but actually there was no reason at all why I should. Neither of us had invited that prize scrounger; neither of us wanted him.

Alan's plan worked. We got over the fence, kept low, wheeled our bikes to the lane, and then sped off. There was no trace of Alf Jorkins when we reached the little side road where the haunted house was, so we forgot about him.

That house certainly did look eerie. Close to it was quite unpleasant. I wasn't scared, naturally, but it didn't look the sort of place anyone would want to spend the night in.

Alan and I walked round the outside of it. The rooms were all bare; wallpaper was peeling off; most of the windows had gone, and there was a hole in the roof.



Instead of telling us where he'd hidden the grub, Jorkins pushed Alan and me right into the ditch!

We found no signs of chains, though.

"How about a look round inside?" I asked.

"How about it?" frowned Alan.

"Scared?" I said.

"Me?" gasped Alan.

Perhaps he wasn't; on the other hand, he wasn't mad keen. Still, we got in through a broken window. Our footsteps echoed, and the floorboards creaked. The stair-case didn't look too safe, but it was all right, and we went up. No sign of a ghost—no sign of chains either.

As there was nothing much to see, we came down.

"The real test," said Alan, "would be spending a night in the place."

"Wouldn't mind—for a dare," I said. "Might think about it while we're having tea. I've got some of those chocolate cakes."

We returned to our bikes. Before we even reached them, I noticed that our haversacks had been moved a few feet away. I rushed to them, and while I grabbed mine, Alan snatched his.

Empty! Not a thing in either haversack! We gasped; we gaped!

And then I suddenly espied a school cap through the leafless hedge a dozen yards away.

"Alf!" I yelled.

We rushed as hard as we could for the lane, and were in time to see Alf climbing a fence. I grabbed his ankle; Alan caught his coat. Together we heaved, and he came back, landing with a thump in a fairly dry ditch.

"Leggo—!" he yelled.

"Where's our grub?" I shouted.

He struggled fiercely; he's a hefty sort of chap, and it was quite a scrimmage. We let him get up, but had no intention of letting him skip off.

It wasn't at all funny. We were hungry.

"What do you mean—where's your grub?" he snorted.

"You know what we mean," I snapped. "You emptied our haversacks!"

With an absolutely straight face he denied it.

"I haven't touched them!" he insisted.

"You've got crumbs round your mouth," Alan pointed out.

"So what? They're from a cake I had in my pocket and which I've just eaten."

I didn't believe him. Then I remembered that plum cake he'd promised to bring.

His bike was resting against a tree, so I rushed for it, and whipped off his haversack. Alf made no effort to stop me. He couldn't have cared less.

I found out why when I opened the haversack. All I found inside was a rolled-up sweater!

"Go on—eat it," sneered Alf. "It tastes just like spaghetti! Haw, haw!"

Honestly—that chap's beyond the edge. He had deliberately fooled us into thinking he had a plum cake in that haversack—and all there was was a rolled-up sweater!

"Alf," I said thickly. "Did you eat all our grub? If not, where's the rest of it?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," he insisted. "And if someone has swiped your grub, it serves you right for giving me the slip. If Alan's mother hadn't heard him talking to you about the haunted house, she couldn't have told me where you'd gone and I'd have been stranded."

I took off my overcoat and rolled it up. The time for arguing had gone. There was only one thing to do; wade into Alf, and make him own up where he had hidden what he hadn't yet eaten. He couldn't have eaten it all. Unfortunately, as I stooped to put my coat on a dry patch, he pushed me from behind into the ditch, and then shoved Alan into it before he had a chance to dodge.

By the time we were on our feet, Alf Jorkins was on his bike and away. We didn't catch him.

The last we saw of him he was shaking his fist and vowing vengeance. Vengeance for what? Did the cakes give him indigestion?

But he meant what he said about vengeance—and he's taking it in an odd way, too!

Just about an hour ago—I'm writing this at about nine o'clock—a telephone call came for me. It was from one of the toughest nuts at the school, Steve Ruggles.

"When are you doing it?" he enquired in a rather jeering tone.

"Doing what?" I asked.

"Spending the night in the haunted house," said Ruggles. "Alf Jorkins has told me about it. Bet you don't have the nerve! All swank, isn't it?"

"Swank nothing," I snapped.

"I'll believe it when it happens. You'll be the laughing stock of the school if you funk it now," he told me with a chortle. "Your pal Alan Scott's funking it—bet you do," he jeered.

He rang off, so I got on to Alan.

"Glad you rang, Dave," said Alan. "I had a call from Ruggles, and he told me you had funk'd spending the night in the haunted house—"

"Eh? He told me you'd funk'd it!" I retorted.

Of course it's obvious he's going to tell the whole school we both funk it. Okay. I'll spend the night there if he will. Alan says the same. We'll see who funks it!

Nothing to it really—although, come to think of it, without any question of funking it, I'm not sure I could slip away from home for the night to do it.

May not have any alternative, though. Don't want to be the laughing stock of the school.

FRIDAY.

THAT chap Ruggles must have talked to half the school. Everyone seemed to know about it; and somehow the word had got round that it's tonight that Alan and I are spending in the haunted house.

"You chaps have got a nerve," said one of the chaps as we stood outside the school tuckshop discussing it during break. "When Jorkins told me about it, I said you were swanking, and I still think you are, too."

Alan and I made light of it.

"Nothing so very wonderful in spending a night in a haunted house," I said. "And Ruggles will be there as referee."

"Not me!" snorted Ruggles.

"Scared?" I asked.

"Of course not," he grinned. "But I'll check whether you're there or not. I've got it worked out. At twelve midnight, you've got to signal with a flashlamp . . . 'school' in Morse. You both know Morse?"

We do. And it sounded a good scheme.

"My home is across the field behind the haunted house—about three hundred yards. I'll see the signal," said Ruggles.

"Me, too," nodded Alf Jorkins. "And that house is haunted all right. The ghost ate the cakes from their haversack. Ha, ha, ha!"

Quite a bit of excitement has been worked up. So far no prefect has got wind of it, but that could happen at any time.

The odd thing is that Alan and I have been driven into this. We didn't actually say we would spend the night in the house—although Alf could have heard us talking about it.

Alan and I discussed it after school. Quite a few chaps had planned to come along and watch, and a fellow named Simkins who's keen on photography said he was bringing a flashlight outfit.

Some other chap offered us a magnetic tape recorder and said we could record any chain noises or ghostly screams—and especially our own howls.

I couldn't help noticing that there was a certain amount of secret whispering and chuckling going on, too. Seems to me that there's some secret joke afoot.

"I suppose we're going on with this, Dave?" asked Alan a little uneasily when we parted.

"We can't very well get out of it," I replied. "But expect some odd noises. I've a hunch that ass Ruggles will be playing ghost himself!"

"Just what I was thinking," nodded Alan.

When I got home, I racked my brains to think how to get out of the house without Mum and Dad knowing. Perhaps it will be easy slipping out of my window. I might try the old bolster-in-the-bed trick in case Mum looks into my room. Might

take the bulb out of the lampholder so that when she puts the light switch on nothing happens. There'd be enough light filtering in from the passage to show the lump in the bed without raising her suspicions.

Just one more thing . . . In case Ruggles plays ghost, I have a little surprise for him—Dad's garden syringe filled with whitewash!

Quite looking forward to it. Should be a thrill.

SATURDAY.

THAT haunted house looked quite different at night. It was pitch dark; and there were all sorts of odd noises I hadn't heard before. They were new to Alan, too.

He's a real pal. He turned up just as he said he would.

"Need we stay there after midnight?" he asked, while we stood gazing at the shadowy outline of the house for a minute or two. "I've got the torch to send the signal."

"If we'd any sense," I snorted, "we ought to have claimed a prize for doing it—a feast in the tuckshop or something."

"Gosh! Fine time to think of that," said Alan in disgust. "But of course we ought. The challengers ought to pay out something—"

"Except we might have had to stand them treat if we fail . . . Not that we shall," I added.

Alan seemed about to say "Of course not"—when we heard a funny noise and he grabbed my arm.

"Wh-what was that?" he gasped.

We listened. It was one of the strangest sounds I've heard—a kind of long-drawn sigh. And it came from the house! Then as we stood there absolutely still, I heard a sound that I can only describe as a jingling chain.

I wasn't scared, but my throat went dry. We stood listening for about ten minutes, but it didn't occur again—though the odd sigh did.

"Could be our imagination," said Alan in a whisper.

"No need to whisper," I told him. "Let's speak out loud."

"No need to shout," he retorted, "unless you're scared! And you needn't make purring noises!"

"I'm not," I snapped.

"Eh? Well, who is?" asked Alan.

He flashed his torch around—and then dropped it as the rays fell on two glowing, cinder-like eyes.

I grabbed the torch up, and although it was waving about rather its light fell on to—a cat!

We both laughed—a sort of dry throat laugh. Then together we marched into the garden and up to the porch of the house.

The door swung a little; it was now ajar—a thing we hadn't noticed yesterday afternoon oddly

enough; but as it moved there was a creaking sound.

"All right, Ruggles—we know you're in there," I scoffed.

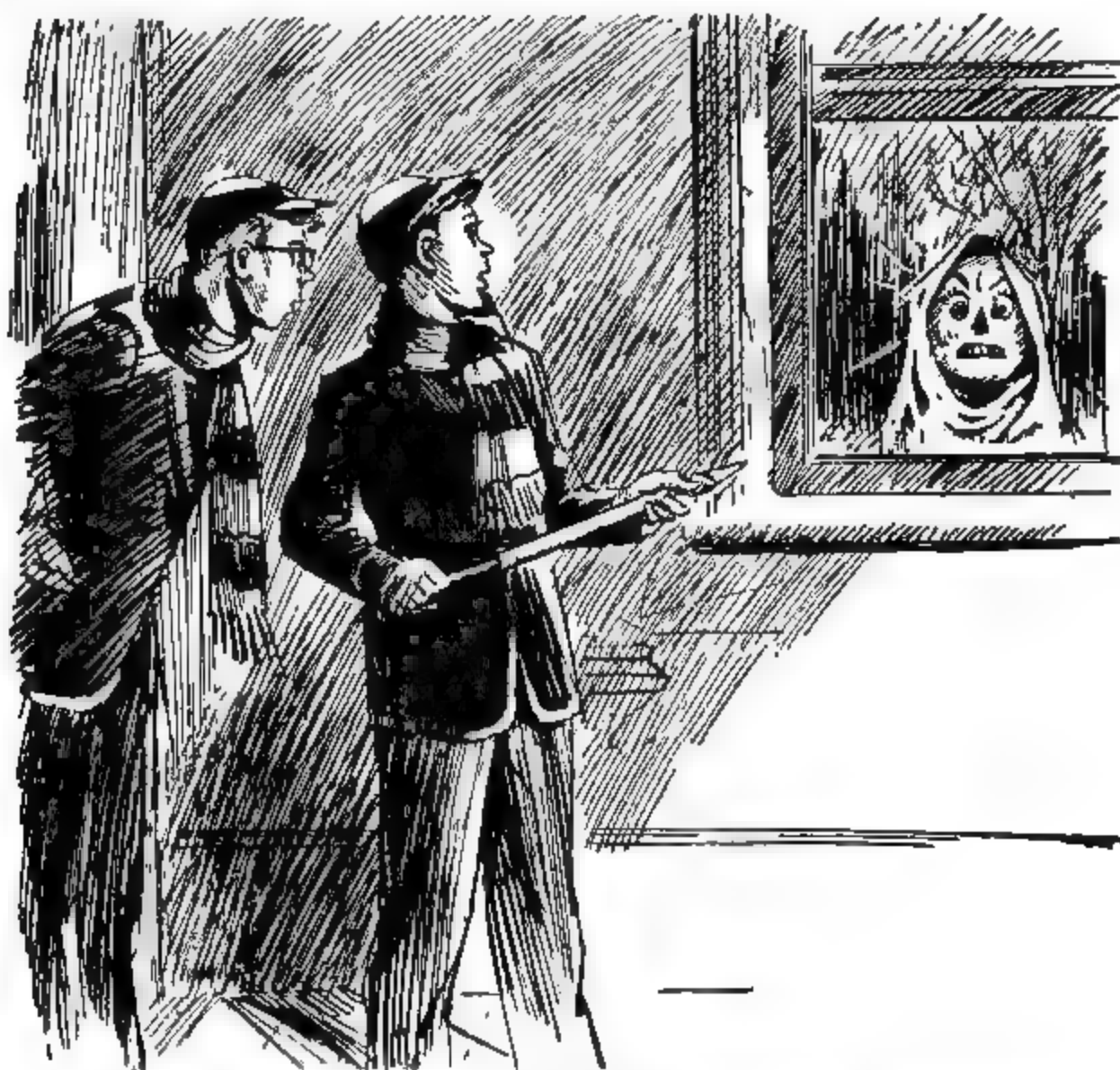
There came an echo—a real echo. But as we thought Ruggles might be there and watching, we walked through the porch. The torch rays showed up the very shadowy interior, and at the top of the stairs all was darkness.

I had a funny feeling that there was someone behind us, so I whipped round; so did Alan. As we did so something went bump, bump, bump, bump, down the stairs.

I turned the torch in that direction.

Alan was as white as a ghost.

"That's funny," he choked. "I heard something bumping down the stairs. But there's nothing there!"



"Look, Alan—the ghost!" I exclaimed, raising the syringe of whitewash.

"We could go up and look on the landing," I said.

"Could do," agreed Alan.

We stood listening. Not a sound. Then suddenly that strange sigh again came from above. I reckon I was as scared as I'll ever be in my life. But I didn't run. My legs had turned to solid lead.

At that moment I saw a glow of light at one of the downstairs windows. I nudged Alan, and we stared as into view came what was obviously a balloon with a badly-drawn face on it lit up by a greenish light.

"A trick by Ruggles," I muttered. "Only a fat-nut like Ruggles would think that would scare anyone but a clot like himself."

"Let's fool him—pretend to be scared," said Alan.

I had the syringe of whitewash at the ready—and now was the time to use it.

"Look, Alan—the ghost!" I exclaimed—to kid Ruggles that we'd fallen for his trick.

"My word, yes! Phew! First ghost I ever saw, Dave," said Alan.

We crept nearer. I had brought an apple or two with me to gnaw, but I could spare one. I hurled it at the ghostly face—but missed.

"Owch!" came a yelp.

At the same time a figure tottered back from outside the window—but not too far back. I got a full shot at it with the syringe of whitewash.

It was only a second later that we heard a fiendish yell outside. Rushing into the garden, we nearly collided with Ruggles. In the light of our torches he was dead white.

"I—sus-s-saw it!" he yelped. "A wh-white figure—the ghost!"

I aimed the syringe at him and gave him a squirt.

He reeled back, and Alan and I shot into the house out of his way. We were so elated that we forgot to be even uneasy, let alone scared.

We both charged up the stairs. Ruggles didn't follow us; but he shouted something in rage—we can ask him tomorrow what it was.

On the landing, I came to a sudden halt. I had heard a door creak.

"It's another of the chaps trying to scare us!" exclaimed Alan, and darted into a back room, his torch beam raking the darkness. "That door—I saw it move!" he muttered, pointing to a cupboard door.

I tip-toed nearer and locked it.

"That you inside there, Alfie boy?" I asked.

No reply.

Alan looked around, grinning.

"Doesn't seem so eerie now," he said. "And—hey! Look!"

We stared at some paper on the floor. It was the cover of a weekly magazine; and we both recognized it by the jam stains.

"That's what our tarts were wrapped in!" I gasped.

There were crumbs and other bits of wrapping paper; apple cores, and banana-skins. There were other newspapers, too—quite a pile of them on the floor.

I picked up one and looked at it—then another and another. There was something odd about those papers, and I showed them to Alan.

"See this—they're all open at the same thing," I whispered.

"Yes—and the same photo showing," he muttered. "About a fortnight old, too—"

Grimly we turned towards the cupboard door.

"It's not Alf nor one of his pals in there," I muttered. "It's the chap mentioned in all those newspaper reports! He's the one who pinched our grub!"

"Who's up there?" called a man's voice. "Come down—"

"Come down, Dave!" yelled Ruggles. "The cops!"

Alan and I hurried to the top of the stairs—but there paused. At the foot of them stood a policeman holding a torch shining up at us.

"Come on down," he rapped. "Playing ghosts, eh? Public mischief. I want your names and addresses!"

"That's right, officer," said Ruggles. "They squirted us with whitewash because we tried to stop them—didn't we, Alf?"

"Well, what have you two got to say?" demanded the policeman. "Don't you realize that playing ghosts is a foolish and dangerous thing? That you could scare some people—people with weak hearts?"

I took it calmly, and with good reason.

"Actually we were investigating," I said. "My Mum had been scared by someone pretending to be a ghost—and we've got him!"

"Got who?" asked Ruggles jeeringly.

"The chap playing ghost," I replied.

"Doing the police's job—and this is all the thanks we get," added Alan indignantly. "I suppose you'll round him up and get all the credit?" he asked the policeman.

"We really caught him," I said.

"What are you talking about—who?" asked the policeman.

"Fergus Hidlington," I said, "the convict who broke gaol two weeks ago and whose escape has been reported in all the papers. He's upstairs. We locked him in a cupboard—"

"Safest thing to do," added Alan. "He could be dangerous."

Could be! The sound of a revolver shot sounded from inside the cupboard in the back bedroom—a deafening report; then another.

"Stand back—leave this to me," commanded the cop, and bounded up the stairs.

The crash of a bedroom window sent us rushing through to the back of the house. On the ground, just scrambling up, was a man who had obviously clung to the window sill and then dropped on to the bushes below. He was looking for something—his gun.

He was only a couple of yards away—so I squirted the last of the whitewash all over him.

He bolted; but he was wasting his time. We couldn't stay to see him captured, but captured he was, naturally. A man coated in whitewash can't get far at night with police cars hunting for him.

Gosh, what a night! Alan and I stayed on for a bit, then made for home—and we both got in all right.

Today—terrific excitement! The capture of the wanted escaped convict was on the radio news.

Dad heard it at breakfast.

"Mum—there's your ghost," he said with a laugh. "The convict—captured in the haunted house! Did you hear? Some schoolboys caught him last night."

"Schoolboys—in a haunted house—at night?" gasped Mum.

"Well, boys today have iron nerves . . . Wonder if they were from your school, Dave," mused Dad. I nodded—and grinned.

"Dave—you don't mean—?" he began.

"You're not mad with me, Dad?" I asked.

"Dave! I'm mighty proud of you—between ourselves," he said as Mum came back. "Ahemm!"

Mum scares easily, and she might not like the idea of my being around with escaped convicts in haunted houses at night. But she may find out.



Before the stranger could run away I gave him a good squirt of whitewash. That made him a marked man all right!

SUNDAY.

MUM did find out. It was in the papers—complete with Alan's photo and mine, and photos of the haunted house outside and in.

The chain was found, and the weight on the end of a rope the convict had let roll downstairs—and then whip up, making it seem a ghostly nothing. His idea was to keep people away, of course.

Mum isn't wholly pleased about it all; but Dad doesn't hide the fact that he's proud about the part I played.

"Boys will be boys, Mum," he told her, and made the worst pun I've ever heard. "It all ghost to show—!" he grinned.

THE END

Mr. X GUARDIAN OF THE MENACED MOTOR-ACE

ONE OF THE MOST AMAZING ADVENTURES I'VE EVER HAD OCCURRED WHILST I WAS TRAVELLING TO PARVIA, THE CAPITAL OF GURANIA, A MOUNTAINOUS STATE IN SOUTH AMERICA.

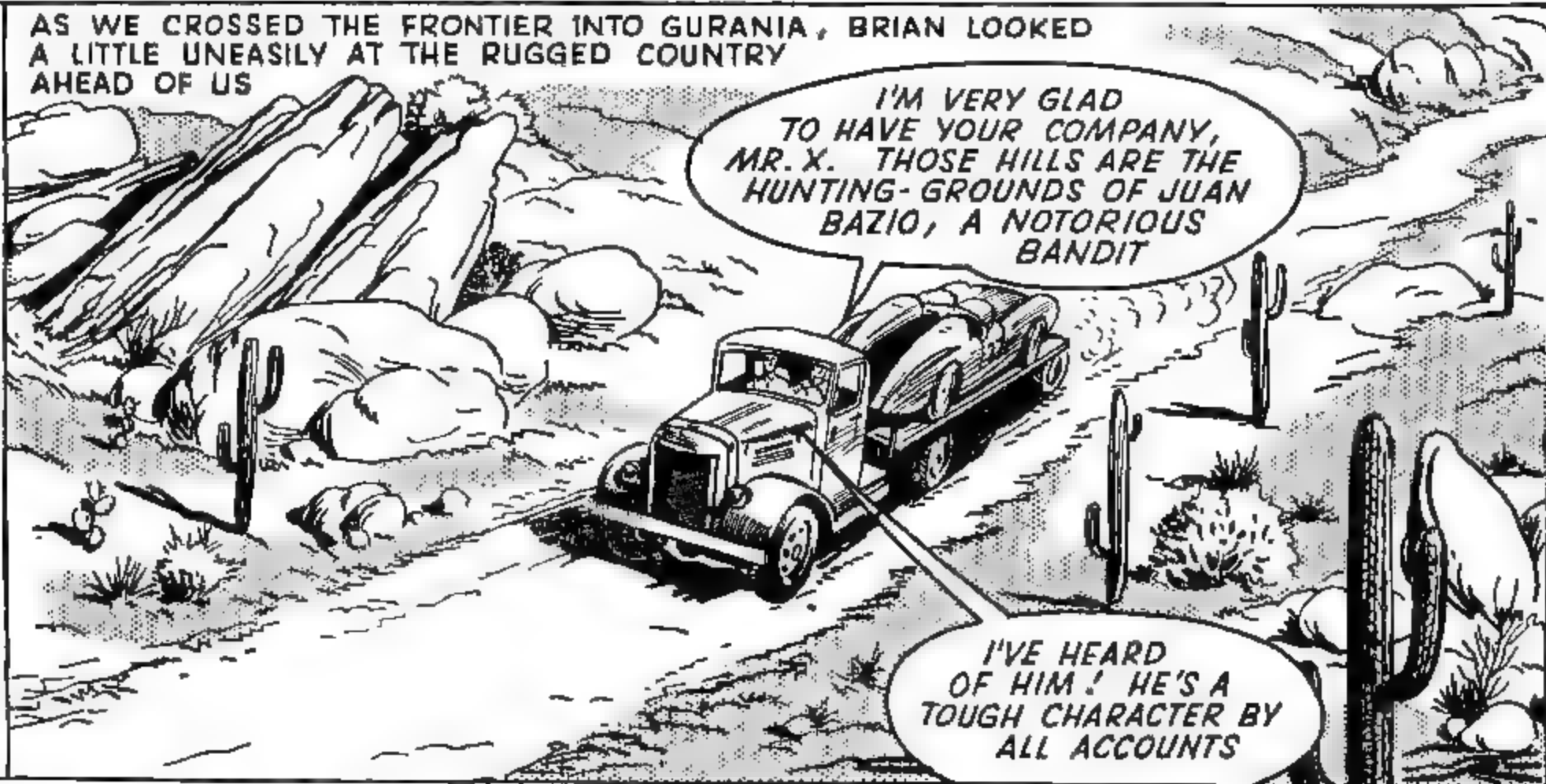
MY CAR HAD BROKEN DOWN, AND I WAS GIVEN A LIFT IN A LORRY BY BRIAN WATTS, AN UP-AND-COMING BRITISH RACING-DRIVER.

HE WAS ON HIS WAY TO PARVIA TO TAKE PART IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN GRAND PRIX. — AND HIS WATTS-SPECIAL RACER STOOD IN THE LORRY, SLEEK AND SPOTLESS, WITH AN ENGINE OF TREMENDOUS POWER TUCKED BENEATH ITS BONNET

AS WE CROSSED THE FRONTIER INTO GURANIA, BRIAN LOOKED A LITTLE UNEASILY AT THE RUGGED COUNTRY AHEAD OF US

I'M VERY GLAD TO HAVE YOUR COMPANY, MR. X. THOSE HILLS ARE THE HUNTING-GROUNDS OF JUAN BAZIO, A NOTORIOUS BANDIT

I'VE HEARD OF HIM! HE'S A TOUGH CHARACTER BY ALL ACCOUNTS



IT WAS A FEW MINUTES LATER THAT A HORSEMAN SUDDENLY APPEARED FROM BEHIND SOME BUSHES

TO OUR ASTONISHMENT THE MAN THREW A NOTE INTO THE CAB

I OPENED IT AND READ IT ALOUD

WHAT THE—?

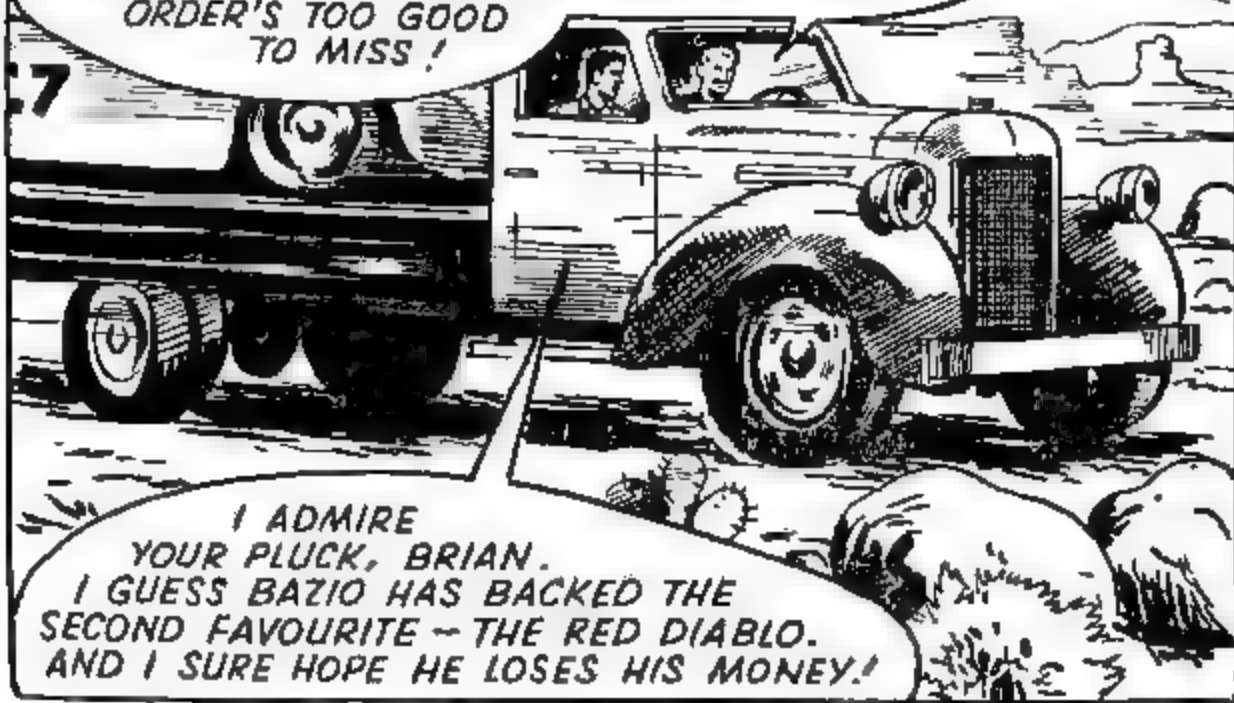
Turn back!
If you enter
the Grand
Prix—you
die.
Juan Bazio



THE NOTE WAS A SHOCK TO BRIAN. BUT HE SET HIS JAWS GRIMLY — AND DROVE ON!

I'M STOPPING FOR NO ONE — NOT EVEN BAZIO. IF I WIN THE GRAND PRIX, THE PRESIDENT OF GURANIA HAS PROMISED TO BUY A DOZEN WATTS-SPECIALS. THAT ORDER'S TOO GOOD TO MISS!

I ADMIRE YOUR PLUCK, BRIAN. I GUESS BAZIO HAS BACKED THE SECOND FAVOURITE — THE RED DIABLO. AND I SURE HOPE HE LOSES HIS MONEY!



HARDLY HAD I SPOKEN THAN WE RAN CLEAN INTO A BANDITS' AMBUSH

STOP!
I, BAZIO,
DEMAND
IT!



BRIAN SWERVED THE LORRY MADLY —
BUT OUR LUCK WAS OUT

THAT'S
DONE IT! THEY'VE
GOT US!

NOT WITHOUT
A FIGHT FIRST!

BOTH BRIAN AND I HAD AUTOMATICS — AND WE MADE
GOOD USE OF THEM!

SAPRISTI!
KILL-A ZEM BOTH —
IF ZEY WILL NOT
SURRENDER!

OUTNUMBERED, WE WERE FORCED BACK INTO
THE LORRY'S CAB

TAKE
THAT — YOU
PAMPAS
RAT!

THEN MY
AUTOMATIC WAS
SHOT CLEAN OUT
OF MY HAND

NOW UNARMED, I RESORTED TO A DESPERATE
PIECE OF BLUFF

A-AAGH!
THEY'VE GOT
ME!

BRIAN LOOKED ROUND ANXIOUSLY —
AND I SPOKE RAPIDLY IN A
WHISPER

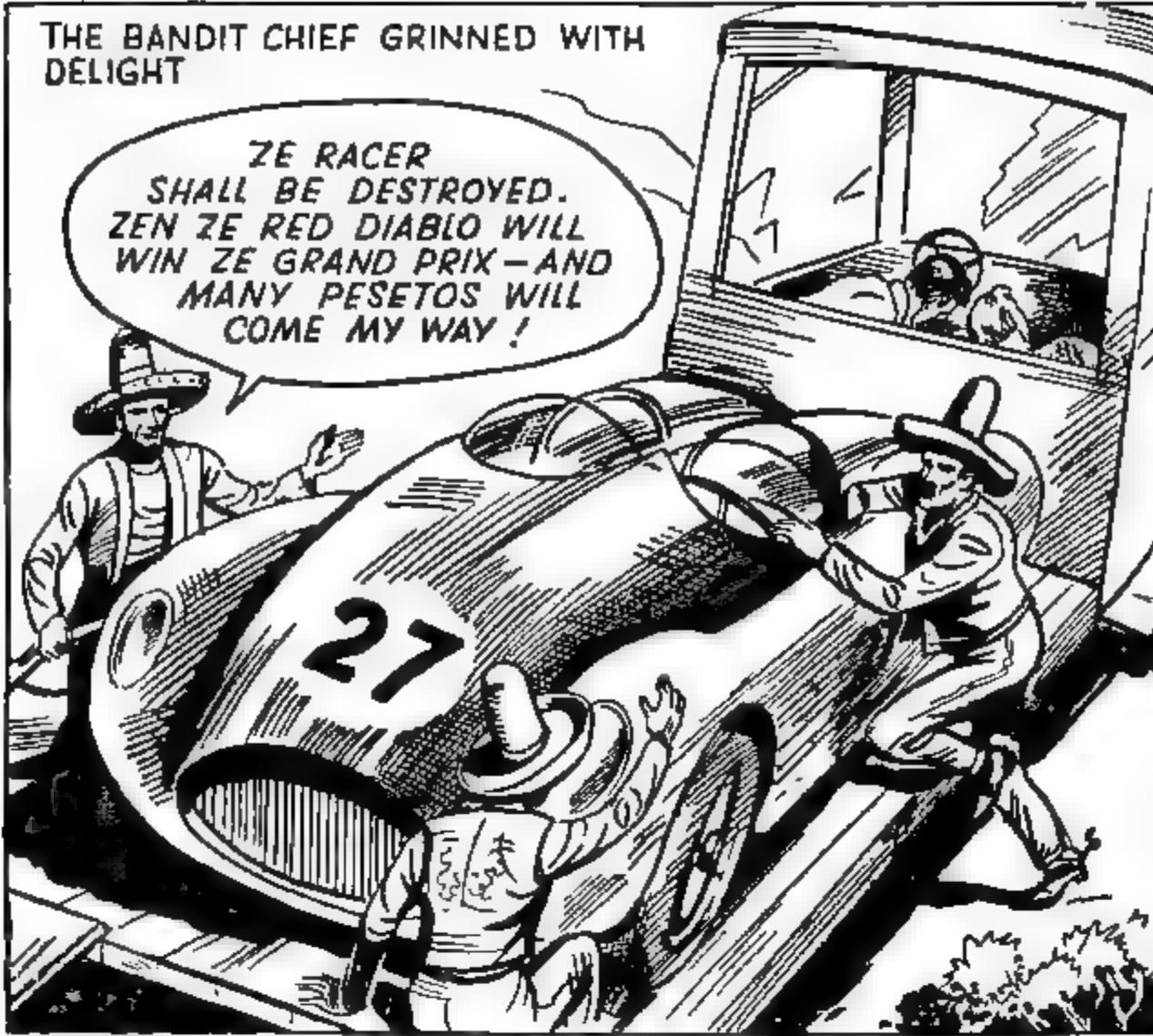
I'M OKAY,
BUT DO THE SAME
AS ME — PRETEND
YOU'VE BEEN
HIT!

I HAD GUESSED THAT BAZIO WAS AFTER THE RACER —
AND I WAS RIGHT!

WASTE NO MORE
TIME UPON ZE TWO GRINGOS —
ZEY ARE FEENISHED! GET ZE
RACER DOWN FROM ZE
LORRY!

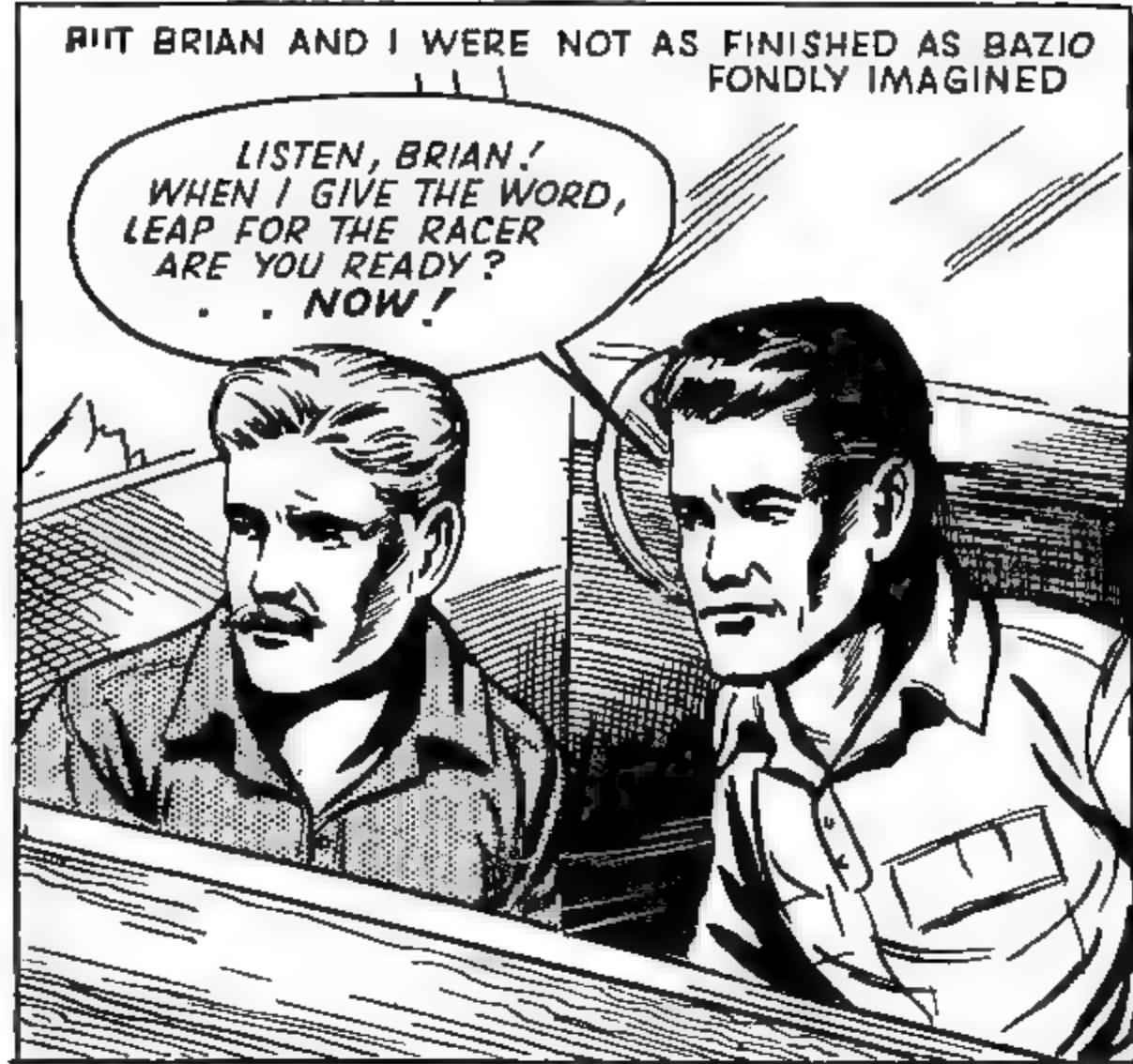
THE BANDIT CHIEF GRINNED WITH DELIGHT

ZE RACER
SHALL BE DESTROYED.
ZEN ZE RED DIABLO WILL
WIN ZE GRAND PRIX—AND
MANY PESETOS WILL
COME MY WAY!



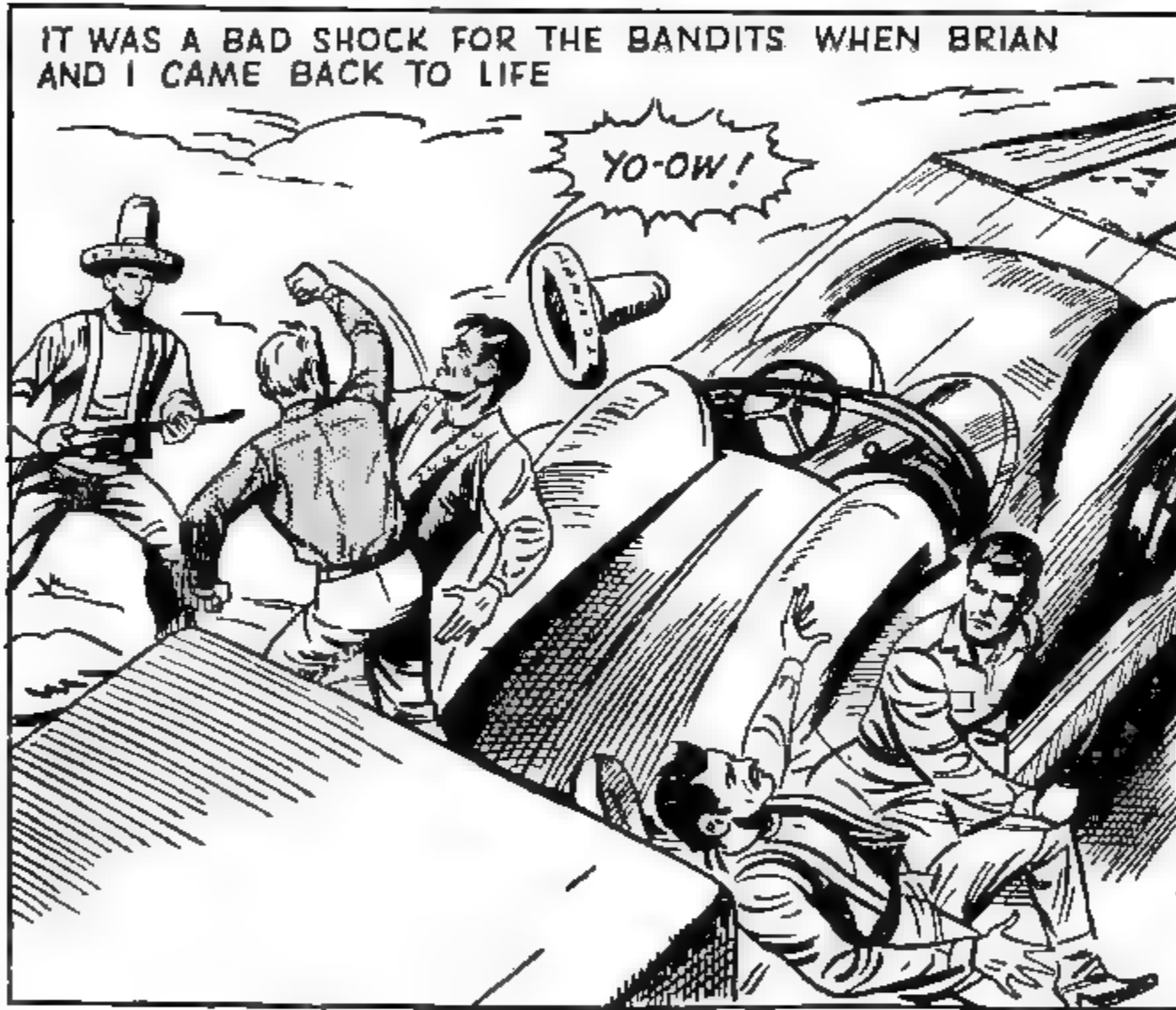
BUT BRIAN AND I WERE NOT AS FINISHED AS BAZIO
FONDLY IMAGINED

LISTEN, BRIAN!
WHEN I GIVE THE WORD,
LEAP FOR THE RACER
ARE YOU READY?
... NOW!



IT WAS A BAD SHOCK FOR THE BANDITS WHEN BRIAN
AND I CAME BACK TO LIFE

YO-OW!



CARAMBA!
ZE GRINGOS STILL
LIVE! ZEY HAVE
TRICKED
US!

THEY SURE
HAVE, FELLER!
TRY THAT ONE
FOR SIZE!



I LEAPT INTO THE RACER'S COCKPIT AND, YELLING TO BRIAN TO JUMP ABOARD, ROARED ITS ENGINE INTO LIFE
AND THEN —

WE'VE MADE
IT, BRIAN! HANG ON
TIGHT! NEXT STOP
PARVIA— AND THE
GRAND PRIX!



WE RAN THE GAUNTLET OF BANDITS' BULLETS — BUT WE GOT AWAY UNSCATHED

PHEW!
THAT WAS HOT WHILE
IT LASTED. WE'LL GET
THE POLICE TO PICK
UP THE LORRY
LATER

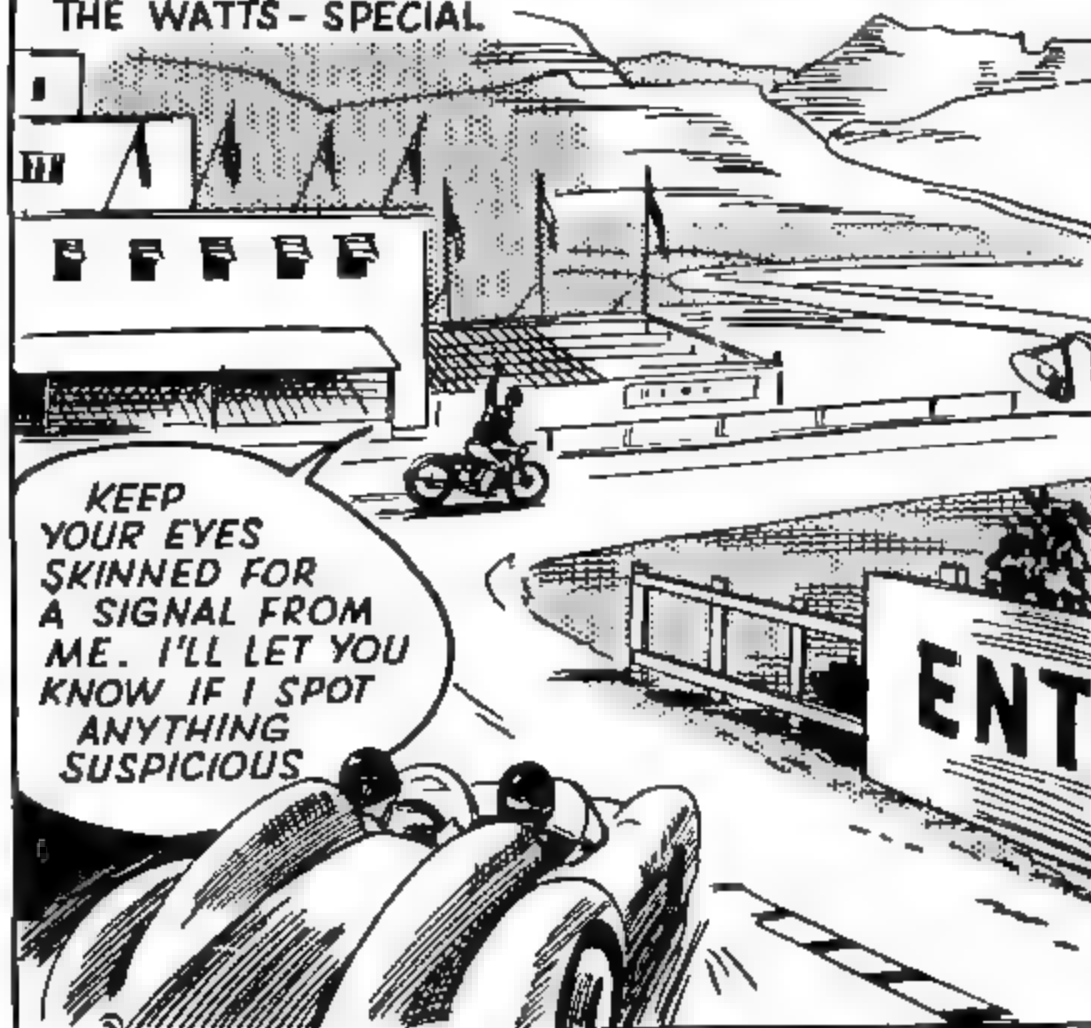
THANK THE STARS
I HAD YOU WITH ME,
MR. X — OR I'D HAVE
HAD MY CHIPS!

AT PARVIA I MET
BRIAN'S CO-DRIVER,
RIP HALWAY. BEFORE
LONG THIS KEEN-AS-
MUSTARD PAIR WERE
PLANNING TO TAKE
THE WATTS-SPECIAL
OUT UPON A PRACTICE
LAP OF THE COURSE —
AND I WAS PLANNING
A WAY TO ACT AS
BODYGUARD TO THEM.
FOR I FELT CERTAIN
THAT BAZIO WOULD
NOT TAKE HIS LICKING
LYING DOWN. HE WAS
MORE LIKELY TO
MAKE ANOTHER
ATTEMPT TO DESTROY
THE WATTS-SPECIAL,
OR ITS CO-DRIVERS,
BEFORE THE START OF
THE GRAND PRIX.

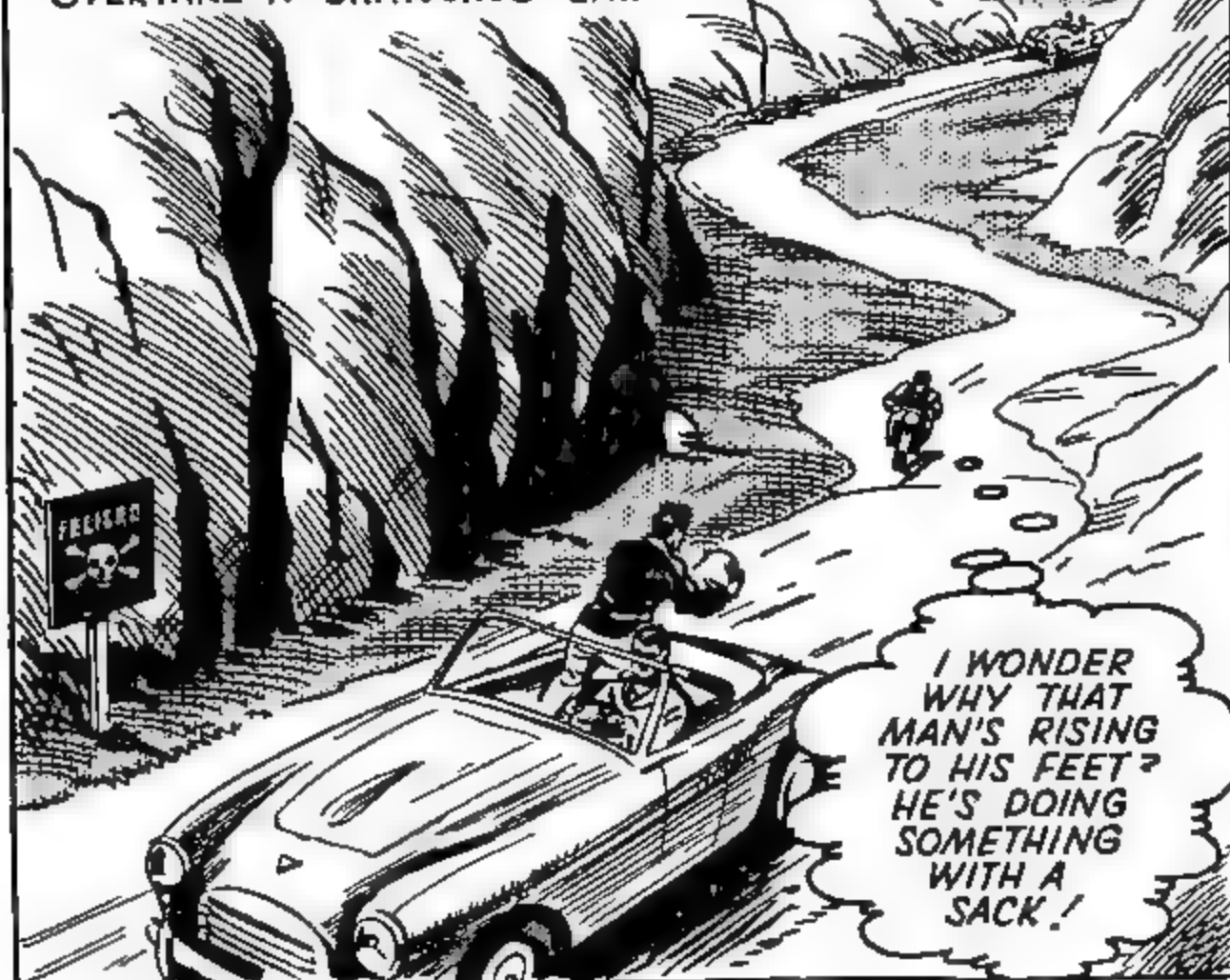


FINALLY I DECIDED TO HIRE A FAST MOTOR-
CYCLE AND CIRCUIT THE COURSE AHEAD OF
THE WATTS-SPECIAL

KEEP
YOUR EYES
SKINNED FOR
A SIGNAL FROM
ME. I'LL LET YOU
KNOW IF I SPOT
ANYTHING
SUSPICIOUS



HALF-WAY ROUND THE 10-MILE COURSE I BEGAN TO
OVERTAKE A CRAWLING CAR



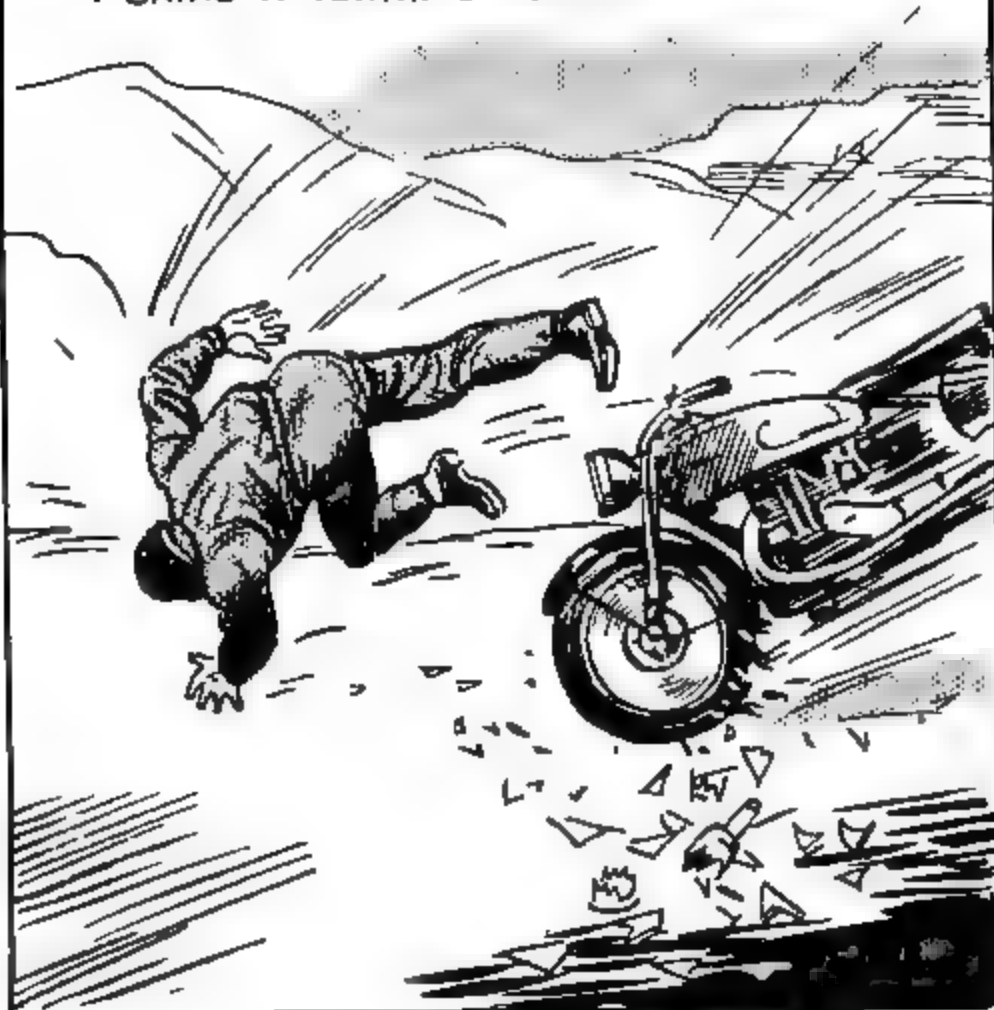
I WONDER
WHY THAT
MAN'S RISING
TO HIS FEET?
HE'S DOING
SOMETHING
WITH A
SACK!

ROUNDING A CORNER, I RODE
BANG INTO REAL TROUBLE



GREAT GUNS —
GLASS, TO WRECK
THE WATTS-SPECIAL!
AND I CAN'T SAVE
EVEN MYSELF
FROM IT!

I CAME A TERRIFIC PURLER

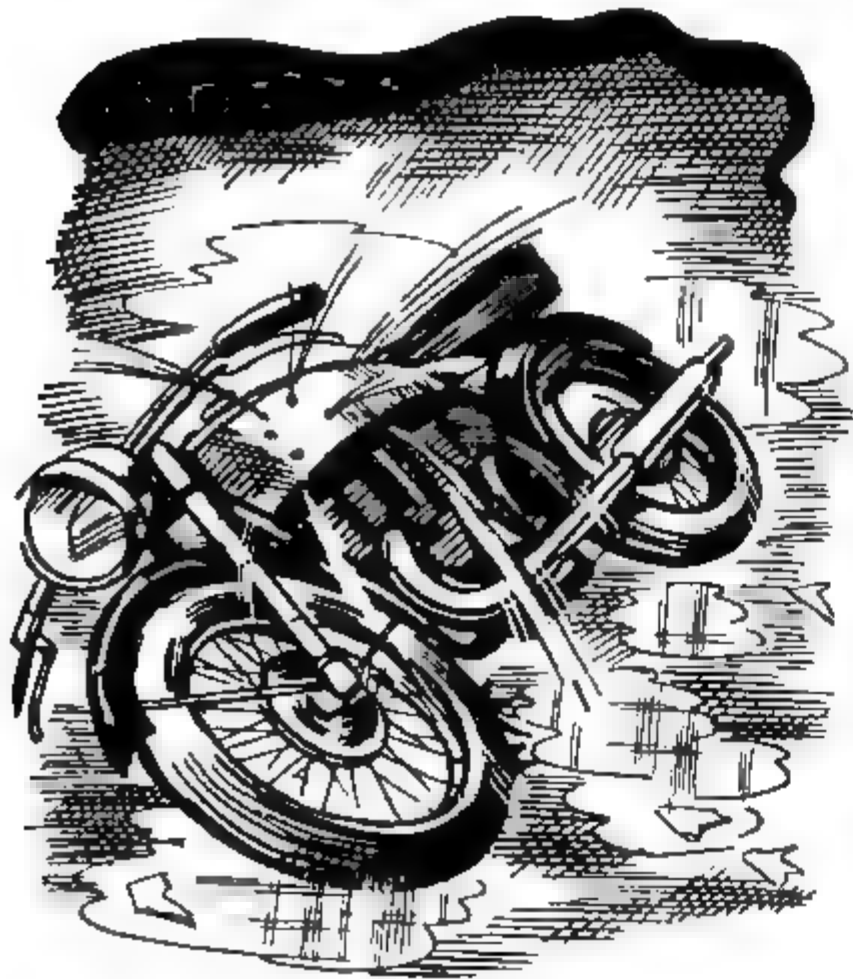


AS I HIT THE GROUND, BULLETS WHISTLED FROM AMONG THE
ROCKS WHERE BAZIO AND HIS BANDITS HAD BEEN WAITING



UNLESS
I CAN WARN BRIAN,
HE WILL RUN STRAIGHT
INTO THAT BROKEN
GLASS — AND CRASH!
BUT HOW CAN I
STOP HIM?

SOME OF THE BANDITS' BULLETS HAD PEPPERED THE PETROL TANK OF MY WRECKED MOTOR-BIKE



DESPERATELY I ROLLED INTO COVER. THEN, SEEING A STREAM OF PETROL FLOWING FROM THE MACHINE, I STRUCK A MATCH AND HELD IT OUT



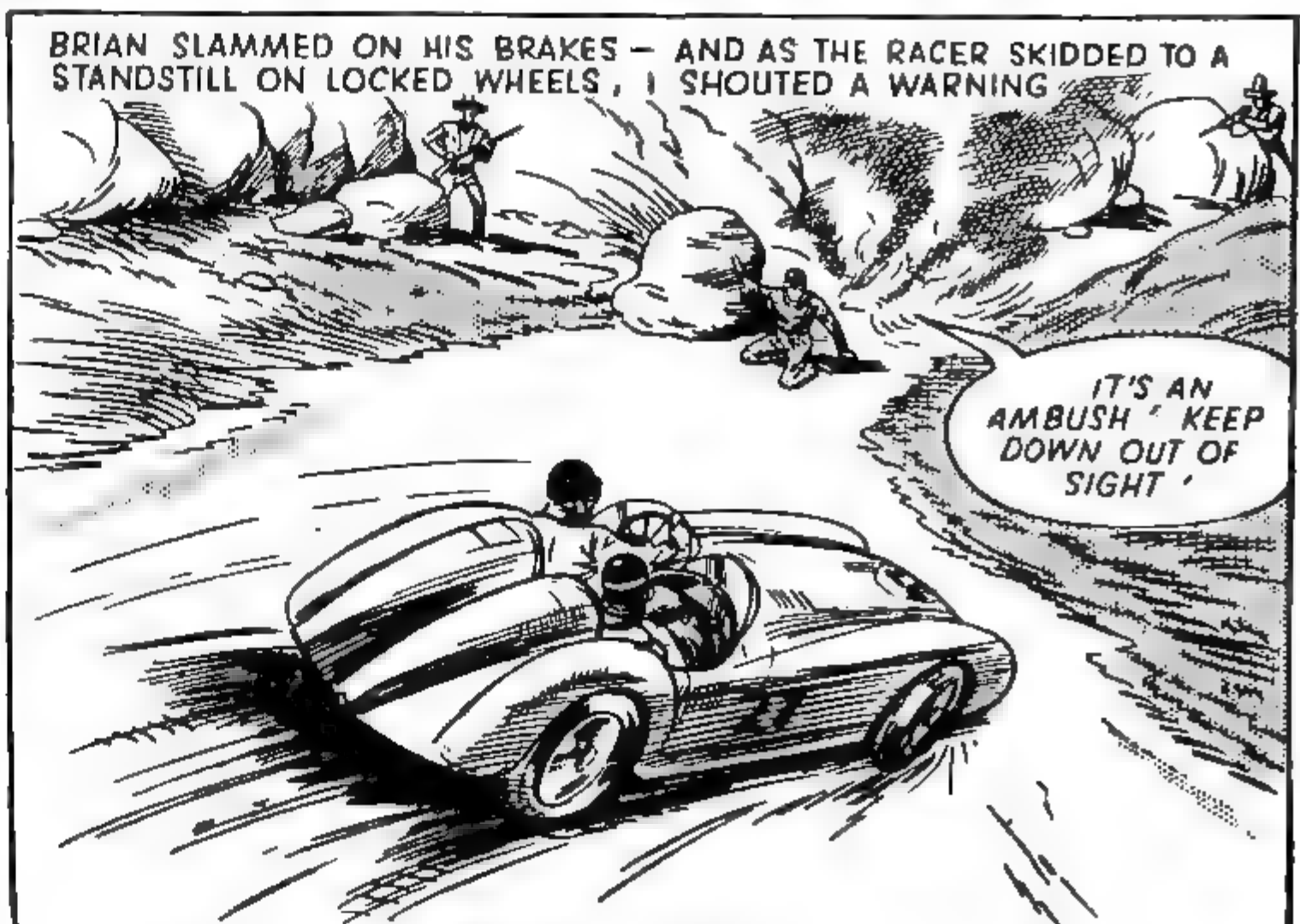
THE SPIRIT AT ONCE BURST INTO A MASS OF FLAMES



MEANWHILE, THE WATTS - SPECIAL WAS RACING TOWARDS THE DEADLY CORNER AT OVER 150 M.P.H



BRIAN SLAMMED ON HIS BRAKES - AND AS THE RACER SKIDDED TO A STANDSTILL ON LOCKED WHEELS, I SHOUTED A WARNING



BUT MY WARNING WAS JUST TOO LATE.
A BULLET STRUCK BRIAN'S CO-DRIVER

U-UGH!
I'M HIT!



WE WERE UP AGAINST IT. BUT, FORTUNATELY, MY SMOKE SIGNAL HAD
BEEN SEEN BY A GURANIAN POLICE SQUAD WHO WERE PATROLLING
THE COURSE

HURRY,
DRIVER! I FEAR
THERE HAS BEEN
A SERIOUS
ACCIDENT!



THE POLICE WENT INTO ACTION
WITH GREAT ZEST AND ACCOUNTED
FOR MOST OF THE BANDITS.

FOR A FEW SECONDS I LOST
SIGHT OF BAZIO. THEN I SAW
HIM, AND SHOUTED A WARNING

THERE'S
THE CHIEF OF
THE GANG. DON'T
LET HIM
ESCAPE!



BUT BAZIO WENT ROARING OFF IN A SPORTS CAR,
FOLLOWED BY TWO POLICEMEN IN THEIR OWN
VEHICLE

CONFOUND
ZAT FELLOW MR. X!
HE HAS FOILED ME AT EVERY
TURN. BUT I'LL BEAT
HIM YET

THEY'LL
NEVER CATCH
UP WITH BAZIO NOW!
HE'LL GET AWAY—
TO STRIKE
AGAIN!



IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THE CO-DRIVER WOULD NOW BE
UNFIT TO TAKE PART IN THE RACE. BUT BOTH RIP HALWAY
AND BRIAN CHEERED UP WHEN I MADE A SNAP DECISION

DON'T WORRY,
LADS. I'LL STEP INTO THE
BREACH. AND BETWEEN US, BRIAN,
WE'LL WIN OUR WAY THROUGH—
BAZIO OR NO BAZIO!

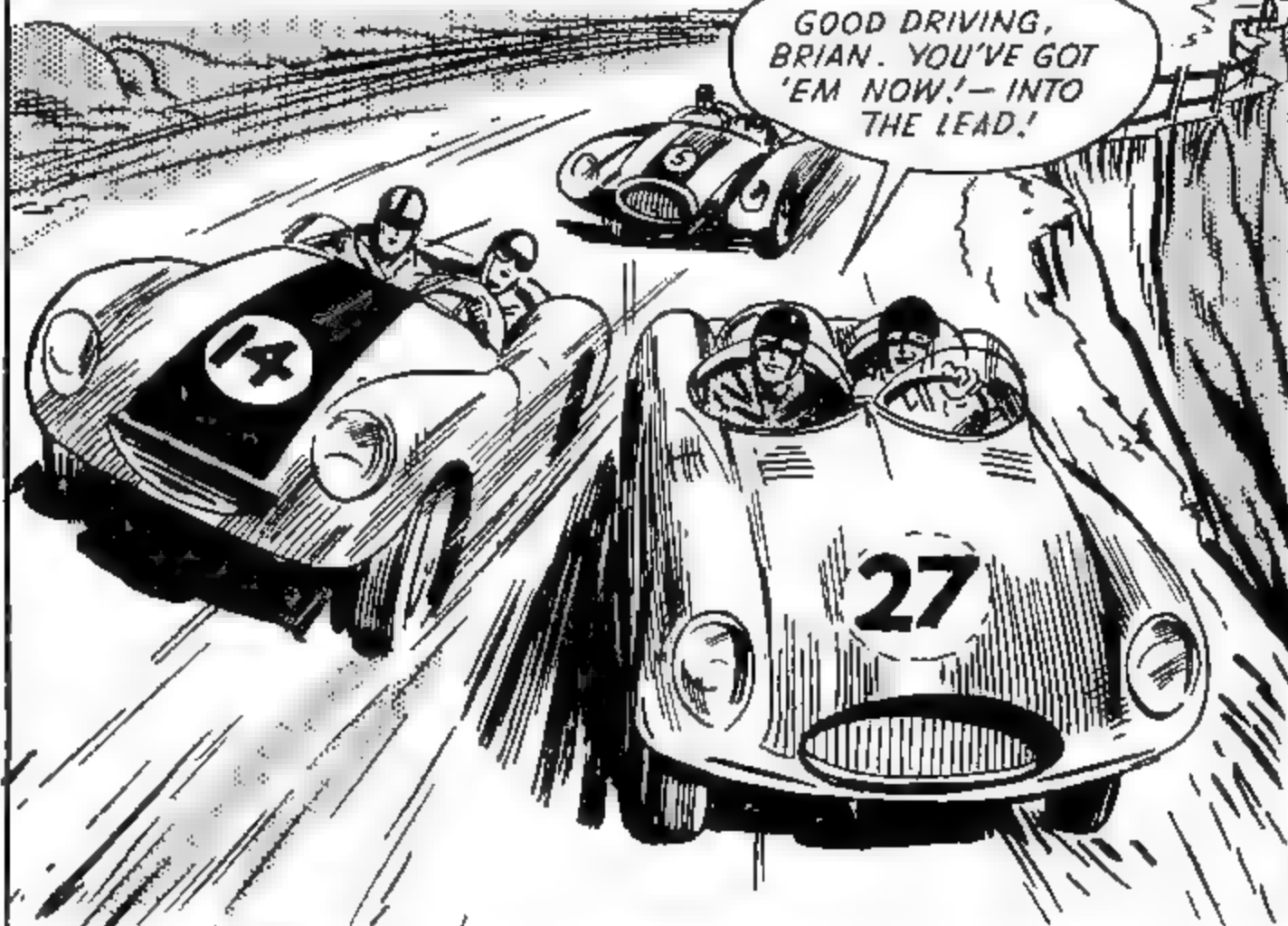


AND SO, THREE DAYS LATER, WHEN THE STARTING MAROON WAS FIRED —



TOO TRUE IT IS — AND WIN WE MUST!

THE RED DIABLO GOT AWAY FIRST, BUT ITS LEAD WAS SOON BEING HOTLY CHALLENGED BY THE WATTS-SPECIAL



GOOD DRIVING, BRIAN. YOU'VE GOT 'EM NOW! — INTO THE LEAD!

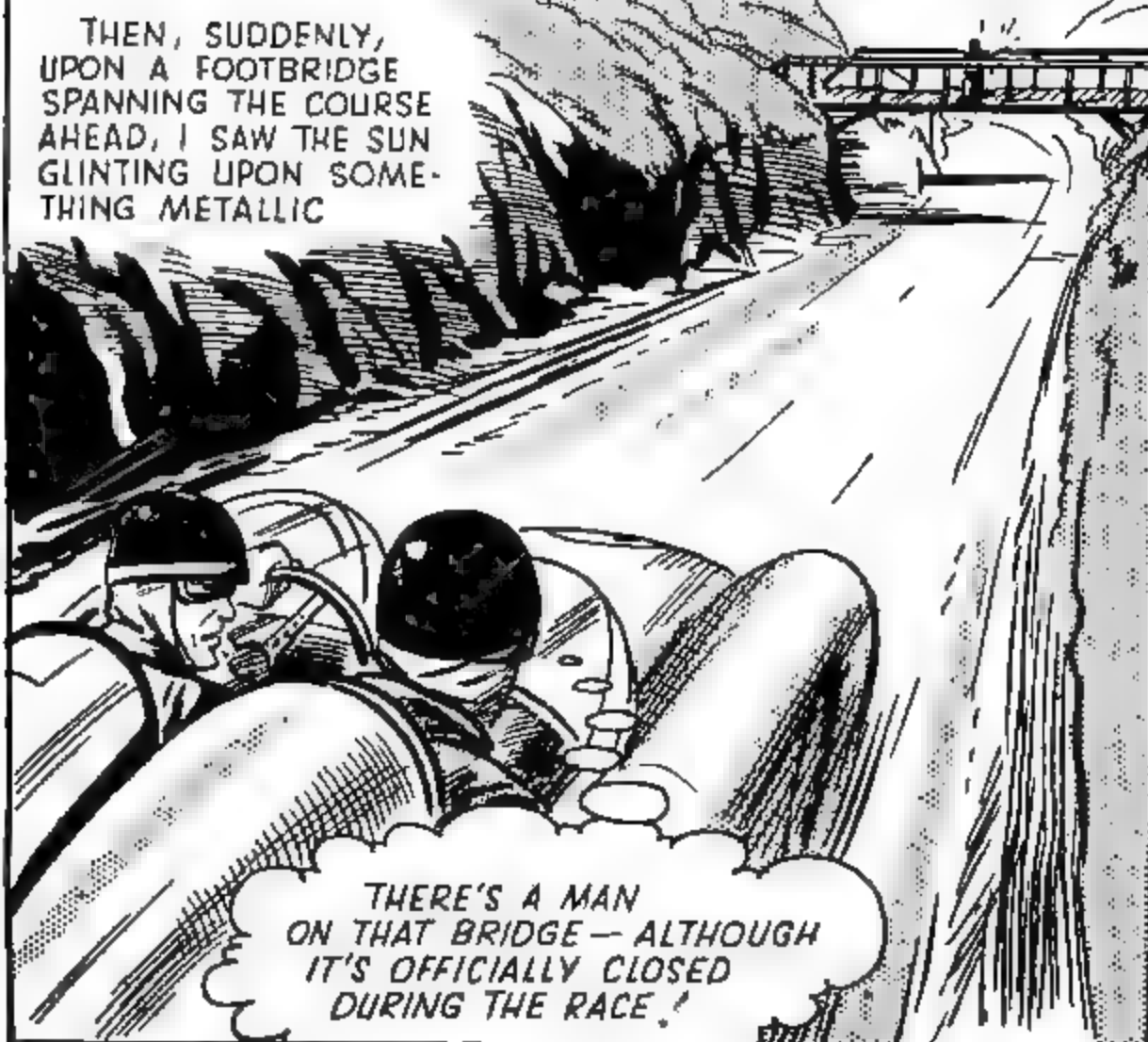
FOR MILE AFTER MILE WE FOUGHT A DING-DONG BATTLE WITH THE RED DIABLO. AND IN THE LAST VITAL LAP —

WE'VE GOT THE LEAD, MR. X — WITH ONLY FIVE MORE MILES TO GO!



AND BAZIO HASN'T STRUCK YET!

THEN, SUDDENLY, UPON A FOOTBRIDGE SPANNING THE COURSE AHEAD, I SAW THE SUN GLINTING UPON SOMETHING METALLIC



THERE'S A MAN ON THAT BRIDGE — ALTHOUGH IT'S OFFICIALLY CLOSED DURING THE RACE!

MY SUSPICIONS WERE AROUSED — AND, IN A TRICE, CONFIRMED. IT WAS BAZIO!



SWERVE, BRIAN — ZIG-ZAG LIKE MAD!

BRIAN OBEYED —
IN THE NICK OF TIME.
AND AS BULLETS
SCREAMED VICIOUSLY
AROUND US, I WHIPPED
OUT MY OWN GUN AND
TOOK CAREFUL AIM

THIS
SHOT HAS
GOT TO WING
BAZIO — OR
HE'LL GET
US!

I FIRED —

A-AAARH!

GOT
HIM!

BY AN AMAZING FREAK OF CHANCE, BAZIO FELL HEADLONG
ON TO THE BACK OF OUR RACER. MEANWHILE, THE RED
DIABLO HAD PASSED US. I YELLED AT THE TOP OF
MY VOICE

DRIVE ON,
BRIAN — I'LL HANDLE
HIM! GO FLAT-OUT
TO GET OUR LEAD
BACK!

BRIAN DROVE LIKE AN INSPIRED FIEND, AND IN THE
LAST BEND OF ALL WE WERE ONCE AGAIN RACING NECK
AND NECK WITH THE RED DIABLO

NOW,
BRIAN — GIVE
HER ALL
YOU'VE GOT!

BRIAN COAXED THE SCREAMING RACER INTO A TERRIFIC SPRINT, AND —

THE
ENGLEESMEN
WIN! BRAVA!
BRAVA!

WELL
DONE, BRIAN —
YOU'VE WON
IT!

I'VE
WON IT? WHAT
ABOUT YOU?

A SHORT WHILE LATER, WE WERE
BEING WARMLY CONGRATULATED
BY THE PRESIDENT OF GURANIA

YOU HAVE
PROVED THE WORTH OF YOUR
WATTS-SPECIALS, AND I WILL BUY
A DOZEN FROM YOU — AND MY
THANKS TO YOU, MR. X, FOR
CAPTURING THE MOST DANGEROUS
BANDIT IN ALL
GURANIA!

THE END

SKIPPER KAYE

SCUPPERS the CARGO PIRATES

BY
MARK
ALDRIDGE



MAN OVERBOARD!

WE'RE catching them, by Hokey. We'll beat them yet, Abdullah!"

Skipper Kaye crouched at the wheel of his little trading schooner, the *Dolphin*, nursing it along, getting the last ounce of speed from the towering canvas of the sails.

Beside him was Abdullah, the gigantic coal-black Nubian. And peering from the galley door was Ah Lee, the Chinese cook. Together the trio sailed the little ship from port to port, picking up what cargoes they could.

They were on their way now to Anatu, a little Pacific island. Skipper Kaye had heard of a cargo lying there. But so also had Abner Nathan, skipper of the *Black Swan*, another trading schooner. By a trick Nathan had delayed the *Dolphin's* sailing so that he could get ahead and pick up the cargo first.

But already the sleek little *Dolphin* was swiftly

overhauling the bigger schooner, which now was less than a mile ahead.

"Ease the main sheet a shade," Skipper Kaye murmured. "That's it . . . hold it at that."

With continual tiny adjustments to the set of the sails, Kaye was getting the very utmost in speed from his ship. It was fitted with a small auxiliary engine—but that had broken down hours ago.

Now the palms of Anatu were beginning to show in a waving line above the horizon . . . and on the *Black Swan* they had clapped on more sail.

"They just wasting their time!" declared Abdullah, his teeth flashing white in his ebony face. "No ship like *Dolphin* for speed."

Skipper Kaye only nodded. His mind was calculating just when his own ship would overtake the other. The *Dolphin* should be in the lead just outside the Anatu harbour. The cargo should be theirs all right.

Thrills and Surprises in a Breathless Schooner Race Across the Pacific

Steadily they drew closer to the other ship. They could make out the figures on deck. Nathan, black-bearded and burly, was at the wheel himself. He never turned to watch his pursuer catching up.

"Doesn't want to believe it," Kaye thought with a grin. "But he'll have to when we show him a clean pair of heels."

There was one man at the *Black Swan's* stern. He was leaning stiffly against the rail, seeming to stare at the *Dolphin*. He made no move to join the others at their work.

"Must be a passenger," Kaye decided. "But there's something strange about him even so. What's going on?"

Now the *Black Swan* was less than a quarter of a mile ahead. It seemed certain that *Dolphin* would be in the lead before they reached the narrow harbour mouth.

Then, for the first time, Nathan turned. He gave a long look at the pursuing ship before he turned back to the wheel.

The two ships forged on! Then a shout of alarm reached Kaye's ears.

It was Ah Lee, and the Chinese cook was pointing ahead.

"Look! Man overboard!" he shouted. "*Black Swan*—man falling in."

Even as Kaye's gaze flashed to the leading ship again he saw the passenger, who had been watching them, hit the water in the big schooner's wake.

"Look out, Nathan!" Kaye shouted at the top of his voice. "You've lost a man overboard."

But the distance was just too great for the warning to carry. Nathan did not turn his head, and the *Black Swan* surged on while the arms of the fallen man stuck up despairingly from the waves astern.

"Eeyah!" gasped Abdullah. "He not know he lose man. He sail on without."

But already Kaye's mind was made up.

"Down mainsail," he rapped. "Down jib. We'll have to take the speed off the ship."

As Abdullah and Ah Lee sprang to obey, they knew what was in their captain's mind. Sailing at top speed, they would have no chance of picking up the drowning man.

And even though it meant losing the chance of the cargo, Kaye was determined on a rescue. He could not leave the man to drown.

With amazing speed, the two crewmen brought the canvas fluttering to the deck while Kaye swung the slowing ship towards the drowning man, whose arms still stuck skywards in silent appeal.

"Get the boathook!" Kaye cried.

The man was still ahead, almost under the schooner's bows. With a deft spin of the wheel, judging the moment perfectly, Kaye brought his ship up into the wind, taking off the last of its speed.

Abdullah held the boathook poised. Then, as

Kaye watched from the wheel, the Nubian drove downwards with the long stave and began to heave.

Skipper Kaye saw Abdullah's face change suddenly to bewilderment as he pulled up on the shaft of the boathook.

"What's wrong?" Kaye cried, darting forward. "He . . . he's not . . ."

But the Nubian swung the boathook aboard, and soggly its burden hit the deck! It was nothing more than a crudely made dummy dressed in ragged shirt and trousers!

With rolling eyes Abdullah stared downward.

"What . . . what it mean, Cap'n?" he asked.

Kaye's eyes were blazing as he answered.

"It means that we've been tricked, Abdullah," he gritted. "Nathan rigged that dummy ready to dump if I looked like overtaking. He knew I couldn't abandon a drowning man."

Bitterly he looked ahead.

The *Black Swan* had made good use of the *Dolphin's* halt. The big schooner was more than a mile ahead already. There was no hope now of overtaking it before Anatu. The *Black Swan* would win the race for the cargo!

TUG-BOAT KAYE

FURIOUSLY Kaye returned to his wheel while Abdullah hoisted the sails again. The *Dolphin* gathered way. But though she was soon moving at top speed again, it was plain that all hope of reaching Anatu first was gone.

Skipper Kaye fumed vainly as he passed at last through the narrow harbour mouth. The *Black Swan* was already moored at the jetty.

"Ho there, Kaye!" Nathan hailed with a smirk. Did you get your medal yet for that daring rescue at sea . . . Haw-Haw-Haw . . ."

Kaye did not answer. But his fists tightened on the spokes of the wheel. He did not moor the *Dolphin* at the jetty but anchored a little way out. Grim-faced, he rowed ashore in the dinghy to the shipping agent's office.

"Sorry, Kaye," the agent told him. "But you know the rule—first ship in gets the cargo . . . And I'm afraid we've only got the one cargo."

Kaye nodded shortly. It was no more than he had expected. He did not tell how Nathan had tricked him. As long as *Black Swan* was at the jetty the cargo would be hers.

"I'd have liked you to have it," the agent admitted. "It's a perishable cargo—fruit—and the sooner it's landed the better condition it'll be in. I know you'd make a straight passage of it—but I can't trust Nathan. If he gets wind of a bit of extra cargo on the way he's just as likely to stop for it."

Kaye knew this was true. Nathan was greedy. One cargo would not be enough for him, if he could get more.

"I've warned the islanders," the agent went on. "They'll do their best. They're going to cut the fruit during the night and load it before dawn. At least when it leaves here it'll be in top condition."

Skipper Kaye left the agent's office to stroll along the island's coral shore. Anger still blazed in his heart at the way he had been tricked. He was determined to even the score somehow.

"If Nathan had beaten me fair and square in the race for the cargo, I wouldn't mind so much," he told himself. "But the kind of trick he played was taking advantage of every seaman's instinct to save a man in danger of drowning."

His fist clenched. Somehow he would repay Nathan in full measure for his trick.

In the hope of being able to pick up at least a part cargo so that his trip would not have been completely useless, Skipper Kaye made the rounds of the few island merchants. All shook their heads. The only cargo going was the fruit.

As dusk fell and Kaye headed back towards his ship, he saw the islanders making for the pineapple and banana plantations, long knives tucked in their belts. They were going to cut the fruit . . . the fruit that would be the *Black Swan's* cargo.

Kaye got back into his dinghy and started to row out to his ship. He passed quite close to the *Black Swan*. Nathan, who was on deck, pretended not to see his rival.

Instead he gave a long stretch and turned yawning to his mate.

"Tell the men to turn in now," he ordered. "They'll need plenty of sleep tonight seeing we have to rise so early to load that cargo we won."

It was a deliberate taunt, aimed at Kaye. For a moment a hot reply trembled on Kaye's lips. Even so he bit the words back, and as he rowed to the *Dolphin* there was a new light in his eyes . . . a light that boded ill for Abner Nathan.

"Abdullah, Ah Lee! Look alive!" Kaye ordered as he clambered aboard. "We've got work to do!"

But the work he set for his two-man crew seemed hardly urgent.

"Grease the capstan," Kaye said. "And grease it well . . ."

As darkness fell, the two members of the *Dolphin's* crew were busy, stripping down the capstan and coating all its working parts with a thick layer of heavy grease. At last the task was finished.

"But . . . but why we do?" demanded Ah Lee. "Why we need capstan?"

"You'll see," answered Kaye.

Impatiently he paced the deck, glancing all the time towards the *Black Swan*. Lights glinted from the other boat's portholes. But at last they went out.

"I'll give them another half-hour," Kaye

declared. "To make sure they're really asleep."

At length he was satisfied.

Kaye clambered down into the dinghy, taking one end of a long line with him, and a pot of thick black grease.

Silently he rowed across the still water towards the other ship. Hardly a ripple stirred the surface, and only a few lamps flickered here and there on the shore. No one could see him.

From the *Black Swan* the steady sound of loud snoring rose as he took his little boat alongside. As silent as a ghost he padded to the schooner's bows. There he made fast the end of the rope he had brought and quickly greased the big schooner's capstan and anchor cable.

His next move would have startled any onlooker. For he sprang lightly to the jetty and cast off the *Black Swan's* mooring ropes!

Working in perfect silence, he coiled the ropes on deck and then slipped down into his dinghy again.

The *Black Swan* still lay as before—but now there was nothing holding her to the jetty. If there had been any wind she would have drifted away.

Swiftly and silently the dinghy flashed back to the *Dolphin*.

"Right, you two," breathed Kaye to his waiting hands. "Get to work!"

Together they began to heave on the capstan bars, winding in the rope that led to the *Black Swan's* bows. It tightened. Then, slowly but steadily, the big schooner began to move away from the jetty. Those aboard would hear no sound to disturb their snoring rest.

Abdullah grinned broadly.

"Now you let him drift?" he asked softly. "Let him go on rocks. No more trouble with Captain Nathan."

Kaye shook his head.

"That would be a wrong thing to do. All I want is the cargo he's cheating me out of. So I'm just going to tow him away from the jetty."

As the other schooner crept closer, Kaye slipped once more into the dinghy and boarded it. This time, with infinite care, he lowered the *Black Swan's* anchor until the ship swung from it hardly a length away from the *Dolphin*. The thick grease he had applied to the anchor made the operation almost soundless.

Now Kaye untied the long hawser that had hauled the *Black Swan* from the jetty and slipped back into his dinghy. There was no trace left on the schooner of how it had moved.

Kaye grinned as he headed for the jetty. How Nathan would be baffled when he awoke. The shifting of his ship would seem a complete mystery to him.

One more task was left. Using the capstan again, Kaye and Abdullah hauled the *Dolphin* to the jetty

with the same long length of rope. At last they could tie up.

And at last understanding was glinting in Abdullah's eyes.

"We be here," he breathed. "Men come to load. In bad light they not see different boat here. They think this *Black Swan*."

But Kaye shook his head.

"Afraid not, Abdullah," he frowned. "The agent will be coming down to watch the loading, and he won't be fooled. What I'm banking on is that he'll give his permission to go ahead when he hears the dirty trick Nathan played on me."

He looked towards the *Black Swan* and laughed softly.

"I'd like to see Nathan's face when he wakens and finds his cargo has gone. He'll be just about the most puzzled skipper in the Pacific!"

DAWN DISCOVERY!

A COUPLE of hours before dawn the islanders began to arrive at the jetty with the fruit.

With them came the white clad figure of the agent, and Kaye held his breath. Then quickly he explained what had been going on and gave a

sigh of relief as the agent's sunburned face broke into a wide grin.

"By thunder, Kaye, I'm right with you. That scoundrel Nathan needs teaching a lesson," he growled. "When he complains I'll tell him I gave you the cargo because he pulled his ship away from the jetty. I'll say I thought he'd decided not to take it."

And within minutes the *Dolphin's* hold was beginning to fill. Kaye's plan was working.

Meanwhile, aboard the *Black Swan*, Captain Nathan stirred in his bunk. Almost automatically, he glanced at the clock with its luminous dial.

"Might have known it," he snorted. "Those durn idle Kanakas are late. It's almost dawn and they haven't started to load."

He heaved himself from the bunk, and sleepily started up on deck. He grinned as he thought of the trick he had played on Kaye. That would teach the young whippersnapper to try to race him for a cargo!

Still half asleep he headed for the side that had been tied to the jetty and started to step ashore, determined to go and stir up the islanders to speed his loading.



Skilfully Abdullah swung the bedraggled figure on to the deck. Then Kaye stared at it in amazement. For instead of it being a drowning man, it was a dummy! He'd been tricked by the rival captain!

One more step and he would have been in the water. But some deep-rooted instinct made him glance down first.

He blinked in disbelief.

The jetty was not there! He shook his head and hurried to the other side of the ship. There was no jetty there either.

Abner Nathan was suddenly very wide awake. Bewildered, he peered through the darkness.

Then a great yell burst from his bearded lips.

"All hands on deck. We've been tricked. All hands on deck."

On the *Dolphin*, Kaye heard the shout and his lips tightened.

"Stand by for trouble, Abdullah," he warned. "They're on to us."

Part of his load had still to come aboard. He could not leave without it. And on the *Black Swan* there was an angry stirring of feet. Kaye heard the splash as a boat was lowered and then followed the steady beat of oars.

Nathan was coming—and out for vengeance.

Swiftly Kaye looked round the deck. The agent had gone back to his bungalow. How could they hold off the bigger crew of the rival schooner?

Out of the shadows the *Black Swan's* boat appeared. There were half a dozen men in it. A moment later it was alongside the *Dolphin*. Knives and belaying pins in their grasp, the *Black Swan* men started to swarm aboard the little schooner.

"Not so fast, you cargo pirates!" rapped Kaye. "I didn't ask for any guests."

And as he spoke, he snatched at a dangling halliard. Gripping it, he sprang forward.

Out he swung in a big half circle that swept him towards the men as they clambered aboard.

Feet first, he crashed into them.

No one could have stood up to the shock of that impact.

The three men who were clambering over the bulwark were swept backwards to crash back into their boat, on top of the other three. For a moment they thrashed about in a confusion of arms and legs.

And while they did, Kaye had darted to the jetty.

He halted the next carrier and snatched his heavy basket from him. Moments later the hard, not quite ripe pineapples were showering painfully down on the men beneath.

"You want a cargo, Captain?" Kaye laughed mockingly. "How would this suit?"

There were yells and threats from the boat beneath, yells which were doubled a moment later when Abdullah brought the deck hose forward and turned a powerful jet on the men beneath.

Nathan could stand no more. Bristling with rage, he ordered his men to pull away from the schooner.

"They go!" chortled Abdullah. "We too much for them."

"Yes," said Kaye. "But for how long? Nathan isn't going to let us go without a struggle—and he's got guns aboard!"

But the last of the *Dolphin's* cargo was now aboard. And with the first light in the sky, the dawn wind had begun.

"Set all sail," cried Skipper Kaye. "We're pulling out."

While they were at sea Ah Lee had to spend most of his time in the galley.

Though there were then only two of them to handle all the schooner's canvas Kaye had rigged his sails with extra winches and purchases so that on the *Dolphin* one man could do what it took three to do on any other schooner.

With amazing speed the canvas was run up the masts and the schooner began to draw away from the jetty. The shipping agent came stalking down with the papers for the cargo.

He grinned as he saw the laden ship.

"Nice work Kaye," he called. "Have a good trip, but you'd better watch out for Nathan, he's as artful as a fox!"

"We'll worry about that when we have to," grinned Kaye.

He leaned from the side and took the papers from the agent's grasp. Those papers would be needed when the cargo was unloaded.

And then the *Dolphin* was gathering speed, heading for the harbour mouth and the open seas beyond.

The smile faded from Kaye's face. Aboard *Black Swan* the anchor capstan was clanking. The sails were being hoisted.

Abner Nathan had not given up hope of getting that cargo yet.

Abdullah grinned broadly as he saw the other schooner starting in pursuit.

"They never catch," he declared. "*Black Swan* never catch."

Kaye did not share the smile.

"Don't be too sure," he warned. "We're loaded now and heavier than before . . . and the *Black Swan's* still light. It'll make a difference."

His foreboding was fully justified. Though *Dolphin* was carrying every possible inch of canvas the big schooner astern began to overhaul her slowly but steadily.

"Heave to!" roared Nathan. "You're going to transfer that cargo to my hold."

Kaye did not answer. But anxiously he scanned the sea ahead. How could he escape? How could he keep the cargo?

FULL SPEED INTO PERIL!

A RIFLE cracked on the ship astern and a bullet sang overhead.

"That was only a warning!" Nathan bellowed. "Next time I'll be shooting to hit. Now

heave to and make things no worse for yourself."

Kaye's answer was to order Abdullah to lie down so that he would be sheltered by the heavy timber of the bulwarks. Ah Lee was safe in the cabin. Kaye himself crouched to get as much cover as he could while yet seeing to steer.

The rifle cracked a few more times but the bullets could not penetrate the *Dolphin's* stout timbers.

And after a little, Nathan stopped shooting.

"He doesn't think he needs to," Kaye gritted. "He's sure he's going to catch us anyway."

And if he did it would go ill with the *Dolphin's* crew.

But Kaye had not abandoned hope yet. Calling Abdullah to slither across to the wheel. He wriggled into the chart-room and for long moments stared at the reef-dotted chart of the area.

Then, back at the wheel, he altered course. Abdullah's eyes widened in alarm.

"You're heading for Shark Tooth Bar," he exclaimed. "You wreck ship there."

Kaye's only answer was to hold the ship on her new course.

On the *Black Swan* Nathan too was puzzled.

"Either he's gone crazy or he knows a passage over the bar," he rasped to his mate. "He must reckon I'll be afraid to follow him over the bar. Then he'll be clear away."

For the Shark Tooth Bar ran for long miles, just under the surface. Once past it, *Dolphin* would be clear away, if the *Black Swan* feared to follow.

"Stick right in his wake," Nathan gritted. "The *Dolphin*, loaded down as she is, must have the same draught as us—even though this is a bigger ship. Where Kaye can go, I can follow. We'll catch him just at the other side of the bar!"

Straight for the bar the two schooners hurtled. If *Dolphin* ran aground the *Black Swan* would still have time to go about on a fresh course.

"Start sounding, Abdullah," Kaye snapped.

The Nubian darted forward with the lead line that would give the depth of the water.

"Six fathom," he called as the lead line ran out to touch the bottom. "Six fathom . . . six fathom . . . five . . . five . . . four . . . three . . . two and a half fathom . . . two . . ."

Eyes rolling in anxiety, he turned to look back at his captain. Two fathoms were only twelve feet.

And to float the *Dolphin* took ten feet. Now there were only two feet of water under the schooner's keel.

Still Captain Kaye held the schooner on her course.

"Two fathoms . . . two fathoms . . . eleven feet," called Abdullah, watching anxiously.

"Eleven feet . . . ten feet . . . only ten feet Cap'n . . ."

As he heard the words, Skipper Kaye spun the wheel. The keel must now be almost grating on the bottom. But they were almost over the bar.

The schooner heeled as she answered the helm. The wind was now abeam. But the sails were still hauled in tightly for the earlier course. The force of the wind meeting those tight-held sails made the ship heel even more. The lee gunwale was awash. Water surged up the deck. It looked as if the *Dolphin* was bound to capsize.

There came the scraping of wood against rock. Kaye felt the schooner surge upwards slightly, then he gave a gasp of relief.

They were over the bar. The water was deepening. They were clear across.

Bewilderment in his eyes the big Nubian came padding back along the deck.

"Didn't you see how I made her heel over?" Kaye chuckled. "Well, when her masts go down—the keel has to rise. And that's what happened. While she was heeled over, she was actually a shallower ship. She wasn't drawing the same water."

But astern the *Black Swan* was crowding on.

"We . . . we can't cross there," bleated the mate. "We're drawing ten feet of water. The bank's only about eight deep. We'll go aground."

"Kaye crossed," rapped Captain Nathan. "Where he can go we can go. He must know a secret pass . . . now steer exactly in his track . . ."

The big black schooner flew towards the bank. But its sails were trimmed exactly to the wind. It did not heel as the *Dolphin* had done.

With a wrenching crack, the schooner ploughed into the bar. The rock and sand grated under its keel, and suddenly she was aground!

Beyond the bank Skipper Kaye brought the *Dolphin* about and sailed within hailing distance.

"You look as if you're in trouble, Captain Nathan," he called. "Dangerous things these sand-banks. . . . But never mind. The tide will be rising in another six hours. You'll be able to get off quite safely then."

He spun the wheel and *Dolphin* bore away.

"Sorry I can't stay to help," he called. "But I've got an urgent cargo here . . . and I know you wouldn't like me to be late with it."

And a great beam split Abdullah's face as he heard the blistering response that came from the stranded ship.

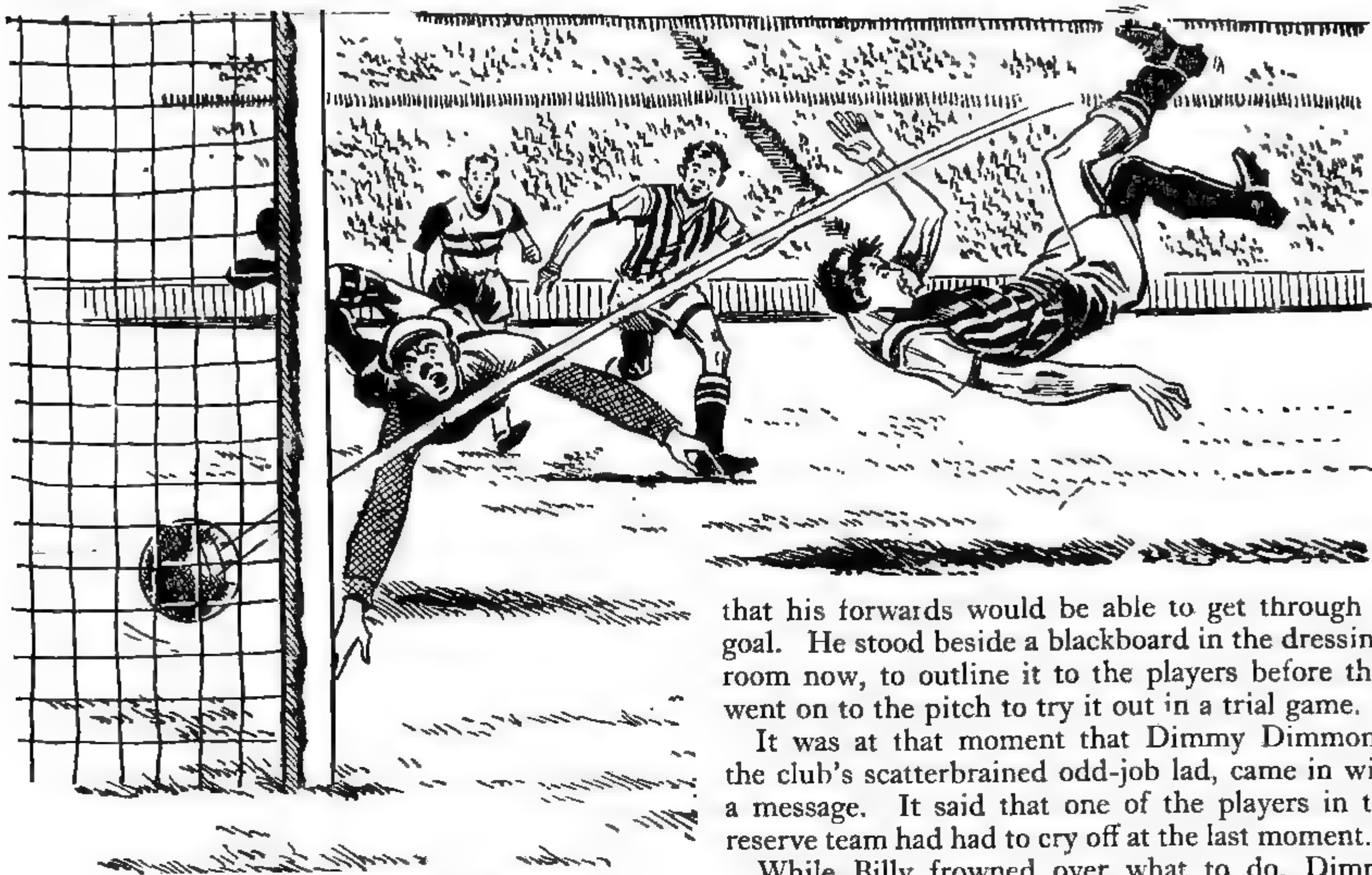
"A mighty educated man that Cap'n Nathan," he chuckled. "And mighty cross too. But he sure learned somethin' today! Yessir, it don't pay to play tricks on Skipper Kaye!"

THE END

The ONE-KICK CUP-WINNER



BY
JOHN
MARSHALL



DIMMY DOES THE IMPOSSIBLE!

DARN it, we're going to be one short for this practice match," Billy Keen exclaimed disgustedly. "This will spoil everything."

Billy Keen was player-manager of Redhaven Rangers F.C.

He had vowed to make them the toughest team in football, and had already gone a long way towards it.

The players had rallied to him loyally, inspired by his football skill and knowledge, his dynamic personality, and his never-say-die courage.

In his first season with the Rangers, Billy had taken them to the top of the Fourth Division, and gained them promotion to the Third.

Now they had an opportunity to gain fresh honours. For the first time in the club's history they had reached the final of the Central Counties Professional Cup.

This was normally a competition for reserve teams. But as it was the cup's jubilee year, all the clubs were treating it as something special and had entered their full League sides.

Rangers' opponents were Dryford, a powerful Second Division side, hot favourites, and famous for a very strong defence.

Billy had worked out a plan by which he hoped

that his forwards would be able to get through to goal. He stood beside a blackboard in the dressing-room now, to outline it to the players before they went on to the pitch to try it out in a trial game.

It was at that moment that Dimmy Dimmond, the club's scatterbrained odd-job lad, came in with a message. It said that one of the players in the reserve team had had to cry off at the last moment.

While Billy frowned over what to do, Dimmy began to show signs of becoming embarrassed. He grew red in the face, kept his eyes on the floor, and shuffled his feet.

"Mr. Keen, I—I could take the place of the missing player. It so happens that I chanced to bring my football boots with me this evening."

Billy had to turn his head aside to hide a grin. He knew that there was nothing accidental about Dimmy happening to have his football boots with him.

A year ago Dimmy had volunteered to become Billy's odd-job boy because he had a burning ambition to become a Rangers' player.

Dimmy wasn't very good. But he longed that a day might come when Billy would find himself in desperate need of a player and would turn to Dimmy to come to the Rangers' rescue.

Billy knew all about his ambitions. He also knew that Dimmy would never make a footballer, no matter how hard he tried, for he was as fumbling and clumsy and woolly-headed on the field as he was off it.

Faced now with Dimmy's eager offer, Billy hesitated. Dimmy would be almost useless—but he would at least make the numbers up to eleven a side.

"Very well, Dimmy, you shall play," Billy

A Tip-top Football Story — Starring Billy Keen, Ace Player-Manager

decided. "Sit down with the others while I go over this plan."

Dimmy sank on to a vacant bench, overcome with excitement, while Billy turned to the blackboard and began to explain the diagrams he had drawn there.

"The main idea is to try to catch the Dryford defence napping by making a quick switch from a W-formation of the forward line to an arrow formation," Billy explained. "If it works, it will form a wedge that will split them before they realize what's happening."

He went on to give further details.

"Naturally we won't rely on trying to repeat this one trick all through the game. We'll save it for a surprise at the right moment. Anyway, let's get outside and see how it works in an actual game."

Dimmy was first on his feet, and in his clumsiness and eagerness he managed to knock over a couple of benches on the way to the door.

Billy's pal Steve Lock, the Rangers' Amateur International centre-half, shook his head doubtfully.

"I'm afraid you did the wrong thing, Billy," he warned. "Dimmy is anxious to be helpful, but it's more likely that he'll sabotage the whole game."

Billy had selected the teams so that the League side forwards and defenders would oppose each other. He put Dimmy out on the left wing of the defenders' team, where he could do the least harm.

His plan would have worked if Dimmy had kept to his position. But in his eager enthusiasm he galloped all over the field in pursuit of the ball, getting in the way of everyone.

But then an astonishing thing happened.

Dimmy was standing with his back to his own goal, not far from the penalty spot.

Someone booted the ball high in the air. It came in from the wing. Alec Moody, the Rangers' regular goalie, had it well covered and started to move in to gather it.

Then Dimmy leapt at the ball. He appeared to be all arms and legs as he performed a fantastic and complicated scissors kick.

Wham!

The ball was in the net. Dimmy had scored for the other side! But what struck Billy was the fact that Dimmy had sent the ball into the net while his back was turned to it and he wasn't even looking at the target.

It was the most fantastic and unbelievable piece of shooting he had ever seen.

THE GRANDSTAND IN PERIL!

SUDDENLY all the players began laughing.

"Dimmy, I'll bet you couldn't do that again in a thousand years!" chuckled Chirpy Sparrow, the outside-left.

"I could! It's my favourite shot," Dimmy retorted indignantly.

"Let's see you try," grinned Chirpy, dribbling the ball out to the wing.

He sent in another high pass. Dimmy leapt. He kicked his legs up and his feet scissored past each other, going higher than his head.

Thump!

Again the ball flew accurately towards the goal. This time Alec was ready, and just managed to get his hands to it—otherwise Dimmy would have beaten him again.

"It can't be true," insisted Chirpy. "I just don't believe it."

He lobbed the ball to Dimmy a third time. Again Dimmy performed his amazing leaping, backward kick. Once again Alec was beaten and the ball dropped under the crossbar into the net.

"Dimmy, this is wonderful!" cried Billy. "We must teach the other lads this trick. We'll call it our Dimmy Special. Tell us how it's done."

Dimmy was covered in helpless confusion.

"I don't know how I do it," he confessed. "I just do."

"Come on—we're going to find out," insisted Billy. "Do it once more for us."

Dimmy tried again, but this time failed completely. They threw the ball at him from all angles. He missed it time after time. The harder he tried the worse he got.

"Dimmy, what's happened?" gasped Billy.

"You've got me all mixed up," groaned Dimmy. "When you make me try to think about what I'm doing I can't do it!"

There was nothing for it but to give up. It seemed that they would never solve the mystery of Dimmy's miraculous kick, because he was the only one who could perform it, and he didn't know how he did it!

The game was resumed.

Suddenly Billy clapped his hands as a signal to his forwards to work the formation switch.

Chirpy Sparrow had the ball. His inside partner raced ahead of him to be ready for a pass. Billy hared down the middle, drawing ahead of the inside men.

Chirpy passed to his inside left, who quickly flicked the ball on to Billy. Billy gathered the ball on the run, and sped towards the goal.

At that moment a sudden sharp gust of wind raised a swirl of dust from the terraces. It increased in strength, whipping up a cloud of programmes and newspapers that had been scattered and left by the last Saturday's crowd.

The storm of paper swept across the pitch. Billy was just about to shoot when a flapping sheet of newspaper wrapped itself round his head, blindfolding him.

His shot went wild, and the players hooted with

laughter at the sight of Billy desperately clawing the paper from his face.

By the time he had freed himself, Alec had gathered the ball and the wind had dropped, leaving paper strewn all across the pitch.

Alec hurled the ball out. Billy pounced on it, slipping past the right back, and squared off to shoot.

Another gust of wind whistled across the stadium, and this time it was Alec who was suddenly blinded as a storm of paper was carried across the face of the goal and Billy slammed the ball into the net simultaneously.

"That wasn't fair! I couldn't see a thing!" protested Alec.

"I'm afraid this game is fated. The craziest things keep happening. We'd better scrub round it," Billy said. "I had no idea the terraces were in such a state. I think we should spend the rest of the evening clearing them up. It would be terrible if a thing like that happened during a match."

Billy sent Dimmy to obtain a supply of sacks from a store room, and then the players spread themselves out in a line along the terraces, working their way round the ground and clearing the litter as they went.

By the end of the evening there was a small mountain of bulging sacks piled in the corridor under the stand.

"There's a job for you tomorrow, Dimmy," Billy said. "You can burn all this stuff in the furnace in the basement."

He turned to the players as they prepared to clean themselves up before going home.

"I'm afraid the trial turned out a bit of a mess," he apologized, "but we'll have another go at that formation switch tomorrow."

The following day, Billy was alone at his desk in the office until late in the afternoon. Then Dimmy arrived.

All Billy's players were part-timers, with other jobs during the day, so that his busiest time was always the evenings.

Dimmy made a cup of tea for them both, then disappeared into the furnace room below to burn up the previous night's rubbish.

Before long Billy noticed a smell of smoke. He thought to himself that before next season he really must consider seriously whether the club could afford a new furnace. For the old one, which had been patched and repaired many times, was as old as the club itself.

Meanwhile, down in the basement, Dimmy was stuffing paper into the furnace, which soon began to roar.

The leaping flames glowed through chinks in the stack pipe. Smoke poured from innumerable

cracks, and began to filter up through the floor boards to the rooms above.

All at once there was a crash. A section of the worn old flue pipe had split with the heat and had tumbled down.

Instantly the broken pipe on top of the furnace spouted roaring flames like a blow-torch. The basement filled with smoke, sparks, and glowing scraps of paper.

The dense smoke drove Dimmy to the door.

He was about to run to fetch Billy. Then he saw that the sparks were falling on the full sacks still waiting to be emptied. They were beginning to burn. Soon the whole basement would become one gigantic bonfire.

Dimmy was normally a complete scatterbrain, but in this emergency he rose to the occasion and kept his head.

He realized that there just wasn't time to go for help. Before he could return with Billy, the place would be alight from end to end.

He fought his way through the choking smoke. Lungs gasping, eyes streaming, he grabbed the smouldering sacks, dragged them out, and up a flight of steps. Then he hurled them into a small yard at the rear of the stand.

He went back, choking and gasping, time and again, until every sack had been dragged out. He didn't even notice that his clothes were scorched and his hands blistered.

Not until he was sure the danger was over did he stagger painfully and half blinded to Billy's office. To his dismay there was no answer to his knocking. He rushed in. The place reeked of fumes. And Billy had collapsed at his desk!

Dimmy pulled him outside, where he soon came round.

Then Dimmy related exactly what had happened.

It was then that the first group of players arrived for evening training. Steve Lock stared at Dimmy's sooty figure.

"Gosh! you look as if you've been trying to sweep the chimneys!" he cried.

"Don't talk to him like that," wheezed Billy. "He's a hero! But for him the whole place would have gone up in flames—and me with it!"

And Billy re-told Dimmy's story.

"Good old Dimmy!" cried Chirpy.

Dimmy looked dazed as the players crowded round him, congratulating him. But he winced when they shook his hand.

"I say! We must get these blisters attended to!" exclaimed Steve Lock.

"The club must get him a new suit, too," Billy put in.

"You don't have to worry about these old clothes, Mr. Keen," urged Dimmy. "It's nothing."

"The club's in your debt, Dimmy. You did a

very brave thing and I don't know how we can ever repay you," Billy insisted. "But if there is ever anything the Rangers can do for you, to show our gratitude, you've only to ask, and we'll do it."

"You really mean that, Mr. Keen?" Dimmy blurted excitedly. "Anything?"

"Anything in our power. That's a promise," vowed Billy.

Dimmy began to stammer and blush, and to look uncomfortable.

"There is one thing," he confessed. "It's something I want more than anything else in the world. You could do it for me, but—but I hardly know how to ask—"

"Name it," prompted Billy. "Don't be shy."

"I—I'd like to play for the Rangers in the cup final against Dryford!" said Dimmy.

A SHOCK IN THE DRESSING-ROOM

BILLY felt as if he had been hit over the head; yet, knowing Dimmy, he should have been prepared for the request.

He didn't know what to say. After talking so enthusiastically about being willing to make it up to

Dimmy by giving him anything he asked for, how could Billy go back on his word? He had promised.

Yet if he kept his promise, it meant weakening the team to such an extent that they could say good-bye to their hopes of winning the cup.

It never crossed Dimmy's mind that he was being selfish and asking for something that would harm the Rangers. He just wasn't bright enough to realize that he would never make a footballer. In his imagination he saw himself as one of the lads, sharing in winning the honour and glory for the Rangers.

This was no moment to tell Dimmy the brutal truth, that he wasn't good enough, and never would be.

Billy did some quick thinking, and had an idea.

"Come into the office, Dimmy. We must talk this over," he said.

When they were alone, Billy turned solemnly to Dimmy.

"To make room for you, I shall have to drop someone—one of the boys who has worked hard to get us to the final," he said. "I just don't know



"I—I'd like to play for the Rangers in the cup final against Dryford," stammered Dimmy. No wonder Billy and the others stared in amazement. For Dimmy was only the club's odd-job lad!

who to leave out. You tell me. Which one shall I drop?"

"But you can't drop any of them! It wouldn't be fair!" Dimmy blurted—and then stopped. "Mr. Keen, I've just realized—I shouldn't have asked. I didn't stop to think—"

"Dimmy, I'll tell you what I'll do," offered Billy, now thoroughly relieved. "I can't put you in the team because, as you point out, that wouldn't be fair. But I'll take you along with the team as the official reserve."

Dimmy's face lit up.

"Does that mean my name will be in the papers as—as a Ranger?" he asked eagerly.

"Of course," Billy assured him.

Dimmy left the office as if walking on air.

Later, when Billy told Steve Lock what he had done, the centre-half shook his head dubiously.

"It's a risky thing to do. Suppose something goes wrong at the last moment? You might find yourself having to play Dimmy after all!"

Billy shook his head.

"I'm taking young Jerry Harkness along too. Officially he'll be in charge of kit—Dimmy's usual job. But if there's an emergency I'll find some tactful way of working it, without hurting Dimmy's feelings, so that Jerry plays."

Saturday morning came.

Dimmy was up early to grab the morning papers when they arrived. He turned to the sports pages. In the list of selected teams for the afternoon's matches he saw "Redhaven Rangers (from)—" Then followed twelve names, his own among them.

He hurried to the ground to join the players who were going by motor-coach to the final. From force of habit he went up to Billy.

"May I have the store-room keys, please, Mr. Keen?" he asked.

"Whatever for?" Billy replied, pretending to be puzzled.

"So that I can get the kit hampers out," said Dimmy.

"No, Dimmy," Billy replied. "Jerry Harkness will look after the kit. You're one of the players to-day!"

"Gosh—so I am!" beamed Dimmy, puffing out his chest.

The players boarded their coach and drove off. At midday they stopped for a snack lunch, then went on to the ground.

Despite the vital importance of the game, all the players were confident and in high spirits. They were determined to gain a victory for Billy, in return for all he had done for the club. Thanks to the sportsmanship and team spirit which he had built up in the Rangers, his lads all had confidence in one another and knew how to bring the best out of each other.

Only fifteen minutes remained before kick-off, and everything appeared to be going well. Then Harry Dart, the right back, gave a peculiar gasp.

"Billy, I don't feel so good," he said in an anxious voice.

Billy stared at him. Harry was as white as a sheet, and shivering.

"Just nerves, I guess," Billy said, trying to make his voice sound reassuring. "But I'll ask the club's doc to look at you."

The doctor examined Harry, and—

"A slight touch of food poisoning," he decided.

"Something he had at lunch disagreed with him. Nothing serious—but he can't play this afternoon!"

Billy turned quickly to Jerry Harkness.

"Get changed," he rapped. "You'll have to play at right half, and the half will take Harry's place at back."

"But—Mr. Keen!" cried Dimmy. "What about—"

"You're my reserve in the attack. Got to keep you up my sleeve," Billy said quickly. "I can't afford to waste a good forward for patching the defence."

"I see," muttered Dimmy doubtfully.

At that moment there came a groan from the inside-right, who flopped on the bench beside Harry Dart.

"The doc had better look at me as well while he's here" he exclaimed. "I think I've got it too. If it's something we ate at lunch, it must be the fish. Everybody except Harry and me chose the cheese salad instead."

Billy felt as if the bottom had dropped out of everything. The team wouldn't have been seriously weakened with Jerry Harkness in the defence. But now his forward line would be a shambles.

This looked like the end of their hopes. It was a bitter blow.

"Get changed, Dimmy," he instructed tensely.

"Yes, Mr. Keen!" Dimmy answered excitedly.

WHAT A CUP FINAL!

DIMMY was the only happy man in the dressing-room. His dream had come true. The Rangers were calling on him to come to the rescue at the eleventh hour.

The rest of the players looked defeated and despairing. Billy, despite his own sinking disappointment, knew that it was up to him to put some spirit into the team.

"Brace up, lads!" he urged. "We've fought hard to reach the final. The cup's nearly ours. All it needs is for each one of us to play a bit harder to make up for this setback."

"That's the idea!" declared Steve Lock. "Billy's right, lads. We're not going to be licked now."

"We'll scrap the arrowhead stunt and play our

normal game, because I'll have to rearrange the forward line," Billy declared. "Chirpy, you'll come across to inside-right and Dimmy will take your place on the left wing."

Steve whispered in Billy's ear.

"I think you'd have been wiser to play with ten men and leave Dimmy out of it. He'll only get in the way."

Billy shook his head.

"If he does nothing else he'll serve a useful purpose by keeping one Dryford man occupied in marking him," he answered in low tones.

He turned to Dimmy, and put a hand on his shoulder.

"Listen to this. It's important. Don't chase all over the field after the ball. Keep your position. Stay out there on the wing, move up and down, and wait for a pass."

"Yes, Mr. Keen, I'll remember," Dimmy promised solemnly.

Billy glanced briskly at the rest of the team.

"Here's the plan. We go flat out from the start and try to shock Dryford with a quick goal. I want everybody on the attack with the halves well up and close behind the forwards," he told them.

When Billy led his team on to the field, the loud-speakers were broadcasting news to the packed crowd of the reshuffle of Rangers' players.

Dryford kicked off, but they didn't get very far. The Rangers, inspired by Billy's pep-talk, tore into them with tremendous spirit, checked them, and swept them back.

Billy and his two inside forwards worked the ball through with close, high-speed short passing. Their half-backs followed behind in close support.

The Dryford defence tried to smother them. A back collared the ball and strove to clear the lines with a long kick. But Steve Lock was there to charge it down. At short range he blocked the thunderbolt clearance which hit him with almost stunning force. Dazed, he managed to keep his feet and push the ball back to Billy.

Billy shouldered his way through. He feinted as if to pass out to Dimmy, hovering on the wing. But the ball stayed close to his toe. The defenders were foxed. He went through them with a baffling body-swerve, swopped the ball from foot to foot, and let drive.

Thud!

It was a tremendous shot. The Dryford goalie barely caught a glimpse of it as it flashed into the net.

The Rangers were wildly delighted. Thanks to Billy they were one up.

Dryford were stunned by the sledgehammer speed with which their defence had been cracked. For the next fifteen minutes they played scrambling,

desperate football, and only brilliant efforts by their goalie kept the storming Rangers at bay.

Meanwhile, Dimmy was still running busily up and down the wing, hopefully waiting for his first pass. Dryford hadn't yet tumbled to the fact that he was nothing more than a gap-filling dummy.

A puzzled right back shadowed him, not daring to allow him too much rope lest the fact that he seemed to be deliberately left out of the game was part of some deep-laid scheme of Billy's.

Dimmy was as eager as a terrier to get after the ball. But he was loyally sticking to Billy's orders and remaining near the touchline, repressing a burning urge to chase across the field after the ball.

Then a long, wild clearance sent the ball rolling towards the touchline near the centre flag. Dimmy saw his chance. He ran like the wind in an effort to get at the ball before it went out of play. He saw he wasn't going to make it, and gave a despairing, two-footed jump.

He landed with his feet sprawling, skidded, crashed head-first into the fence, and fell like a log.

Dimmy had knocked himself out before he had even touched the ball!

When Dimmy had been carried off, a change came over the game. Although the strength of the Rangers had not been affected, Dryford were encouraged by the fact that they now had only ten men against them. They had a spare defender who could afford to roam about the field.

The Rangers' attack was blunted. They were worn down, forced into their own half of the field. It became a dogged fight to try to hold their one-goal lead.

At half-time the Rangers entered their dressing-room to find Dimmy sitting glumly on a bench with a bandage round his head.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Keen," he groaned. "I wouldn't have had this happen for anything. I've let the team down."

"Don't blame yourself, Dimmy. You made a good effort. Don't worry. The Rangers will pull through," Billy promised.

The Rangers went out for the second half, confident in their ability to survive the next forty-five minutes and cling to their one all-important goal.

They settled down doggedly to tackle their task. It didn't produce brilliant football, but there were plenty of thrills for the crowd, with Dryford hammering away relentlessly and being foiled again and again as the Rangers' goal survived breathless attacks.

When there was ten minutes of play left, Dryford began to show signs of flagging. Then suddenly they surged forward again, staging their most desperate attack of all.

The Rangers' defenders were overwhelmed. The

Dryford attack crashed through. Alec Moody, the Rangers' goalie, started to run out, then changed his mind and dashed back between the posts.

The moment of hesitation was fatal. A shot came crashing in, and Alec was left with no time to position himself. He hurled himself at the ball and almost held it. But it was going too fast to grasp. The shot hurtled into the net.

Dryford had drawn level!

A moment later there was a sudden roar from the Rangers' supporters.

Dimmy stood on the touchline, his head still bandaged, trying to catch the referee's eye!

Dimmy, too, had heard the news, and had come back to help his team!

The referee signalled him on. Play started again.

Billy was making strenuous efforts to launch an attack which would bring the essential goal, but the Dryford defence was solid, and the minutes were ticking away.

Billy and his fellow forwards were being relentlessly shadowed and tackled. They weren't given an inch to move in.

Dimmy was being ignored. The defenders had decided that he was a harmless passenger. They allowed him to roam where he liked while they concentrated on tackling the other four forwards.

Dimmy seethed with impatience. As Dryford continued to press, he felt that his team needed him. But the ball just wouldn't come his way.

The crowd were too thrilled with the game to notice his inactivity.

The minutes passed—and still no further score came.

Back and forth the ball was swung. One smashing shot from Billy hit the Dryford crossbar and rebounded thirty yards. A hectic scramble resulted in an accurate pass to the Dryford inside-right. He headed goalwards like a streak of light.

When tackled, he passed to the inside-left—who transferred the ball to his winger.

Over came a perfect centre. But the Rangers' goalie tore out and leapt high into the air. Dodging this way and that, he evaded all the onslaughts of the Dryford attack.

With a terrific throw he tried to send the ball to Billy. It dropped short and fell at the feet of the opposing centre-half.

Desperately Billy ran back and tackled him.

A skilful tap took it away from the Dryford man's feet—then the Rangers' skipper set off with it under complete control.

The game was in its dying seconds. Billy was making one last furious all-out effort to smash his way through the tight defence.

The ball was at his toe, but he was being tackled on all sides.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw Dimmy standing alone and unmarked, his back to the Dryford goal.

Billy decided on a reckless gamble. He hooked his toe under the ball and skied it towards Dimmy.

Dimmy leapt in the air, a tangle of waving limbs. His legs scissored.

The Dryford goalie watched the amazing contortions with unconcern. Then suddenly his expression changed to alarm and he leapt across his goal.

But he was too late.

Dimmy had booted the ball backwards past his own left ear! It went like a bomb.

The goalie dived flat, and missed.

A second of stunned and utter silence fell over the ground, followed by an explosive, joyous roar from the thousands of fans who had travelled up from Redhaven.

"It's in! It's there! It's a goal! We've done it!"

Dryford kicked off again, but seconds later the final whistle blew.

Fans surged on to the field to swarm round the exhausted Rangers. One by one Billy and his pals were hoisted shoulder high. And so was Dimmy.

When Billy was carried up the steps to receive the cup he made a gesture that brought a roar of approval from the Rangers' fans.

He handed the plinth to Dimmy, giving him the job of carrying it back to the dressing-room.

Nothing could have pleased Dimmy more. It was the greatest moment of his life.

Steve grinned happily at Billy.

"I guess you were right to play Dimmy after all," he admitted. "What a match to remember!"

"Dimmy's match!" chuckled Billy. "Think of it. He only kicked the ball once—and that kick won the cup for the Rangers!"

PADDY PAYNE

FIGHTER-PILOT, VERSUS

DESERT SPIES

BY MARK ROSS

WHILE SERVING IN NORTH AFRICA DURING WORLD WAR II, PADDY PAYNE AND HIS PAL, DICK SMITH, WERE SENT OUT ON PATROL ABOVE THE SUN-SCORCHED DESERT. AS THEY ROARED THROUGH THE AIR THEY KEPT IN TOUCH BY RADIO

BUSINESS ISN'T EXACTLY BRISK, EH, DICKO? MAYBE THE NAZIS HAVE LEGGOED IT FOR BERLIN

THIS IS JUST A JOY RIDE, SKIPPER. SHALL WE CALL IT A DAY AND HEAD FOR HOME?

AT THAT INSTANT PADDY'S ROVING GAZE FASTENED ON SOMETHING THAT BROUGHT A GLEAM TO HIS EYES

HOME? NOT SO FAST, PAL. LOOKS LIKE WE'VE A CUSTOMER SEE-- DOWN THERE!

A LONE NAZI PLANE WAS STREAKING INLAND!

NICE SPOTTING, PADDY. SHALL WE JUMP HIM TOGETHER?

NO, CHUM, LEAVE HIM TO ME. YOU WATCH OUT FOR OTHER STRAY BANDITS

EASING HIS CONTROL COLUMN FORWARD, PADDY JABBED THE FIRING BUTTON

THE NAZI AVIATORS WERE TAKEN BY SURPRISE AS PADDY'S SIGHTING BURST SLICED PAST THEM

DONNER UND BLITZEN - AN ENGLANDER PLANE!

SHOOT BACK AT HIM, YOU FOOL. ENGAGE HIM IN COMBAT IMMEDIATELY!

DICK KEPT CLEAR, FEELING CONFIDENT THAT HIS PAL NEEDED NO HELP



THAT WAS A NEAR THING FOR THE NAZI—PADDY MISSED HIM BY INCHES. THE BANDIT WON'T GET A SECOND CHANCE!

BUT, AS PADDY ZOOMED IN FOR ANOTHER ATTACK, THE DOOR OF THE ENEMY MACHINE SLID BACK



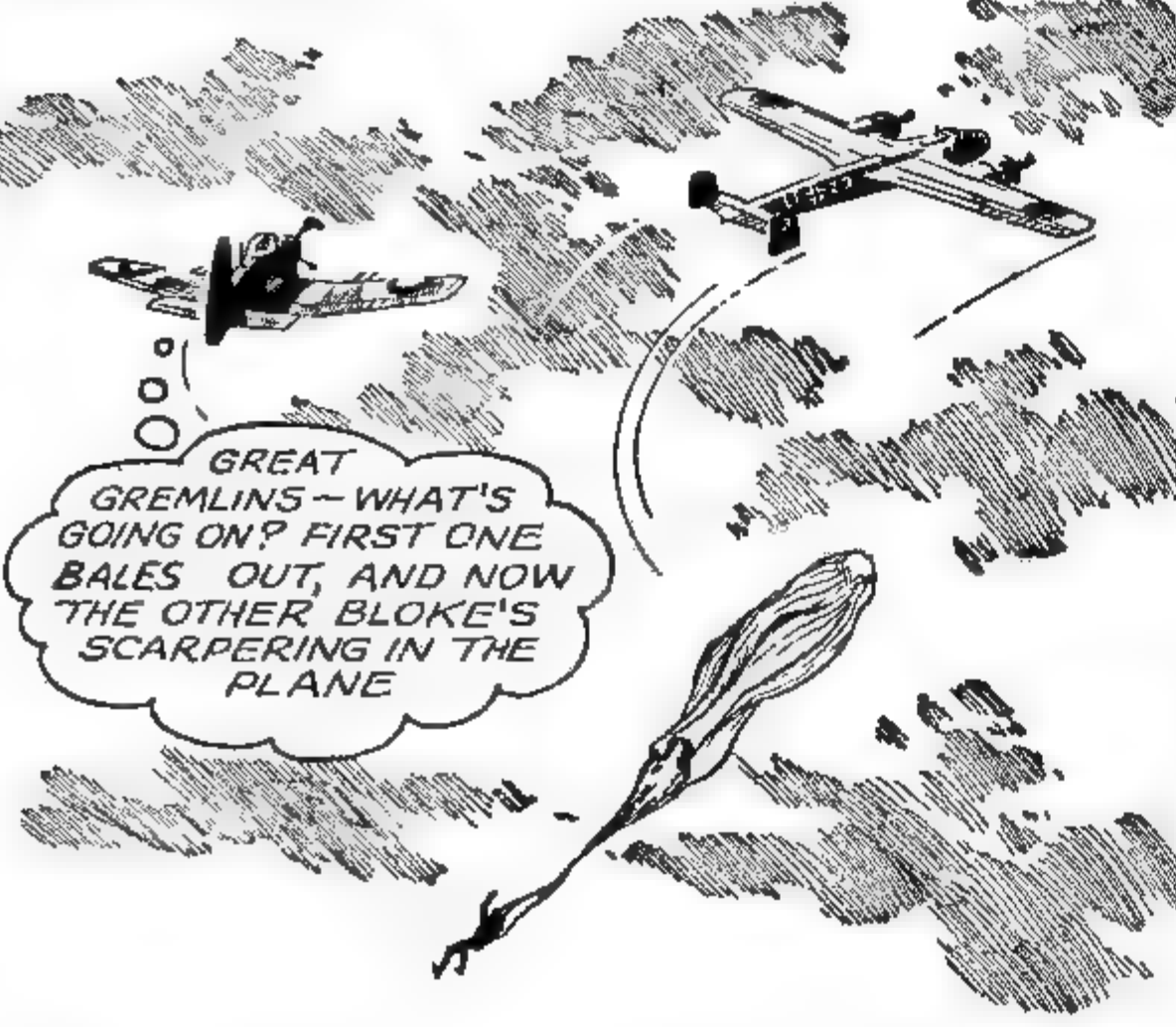
HEY—WHAT'S UP? ARE THEY GOING TO ABANDON SHIP?

A SECOND LATER A LONE FIGURE SHOT OUT



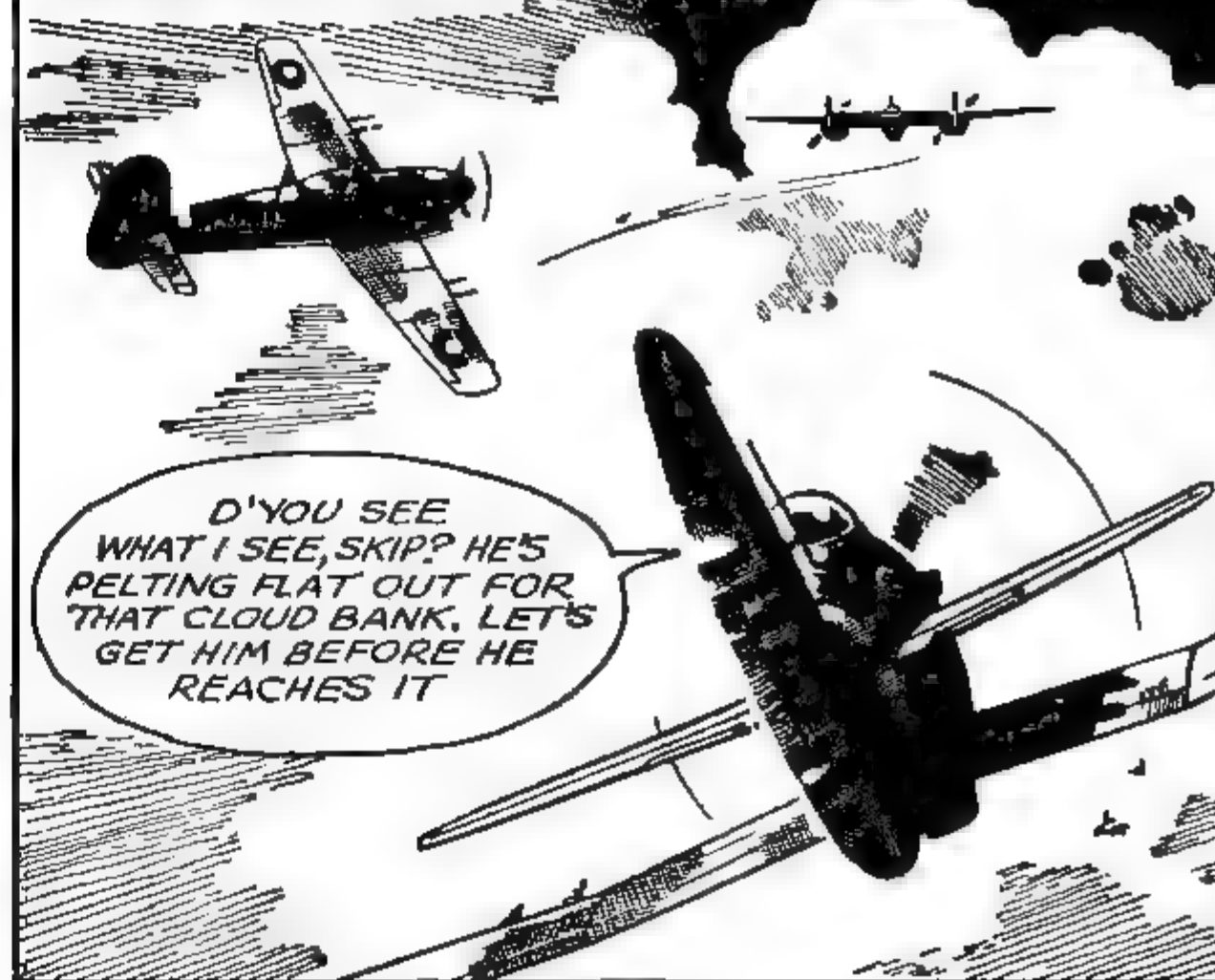
I WAS RIGHT! HE'S HITTING THE SILK. BUT WHY? I HAVEN'T EVEN SCRATCHED HIM YET!

THERE WAS AN EVEN BIGGER SHOCK AWAITING PADDY WHEN—



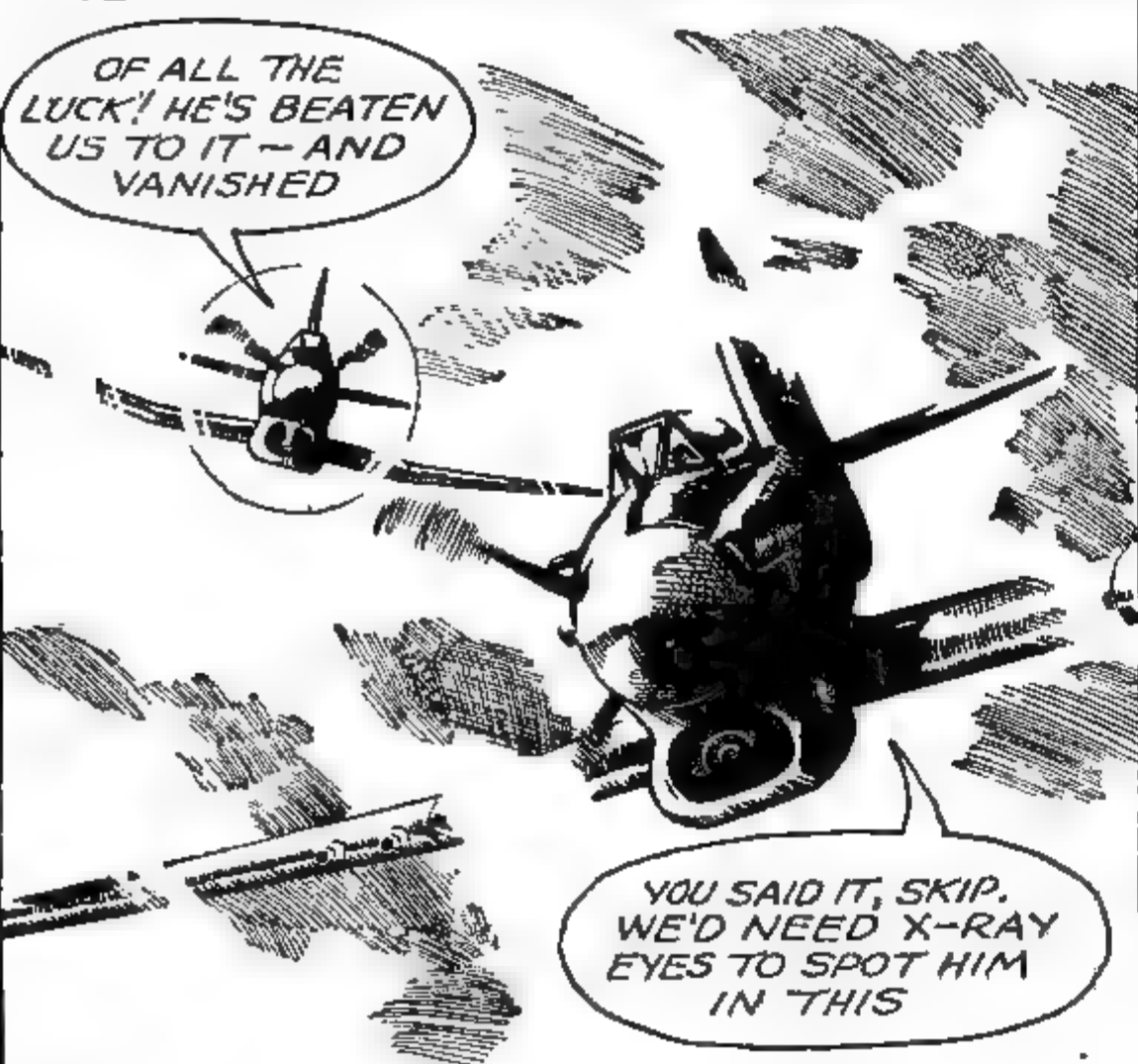
GREAT GREMLINS—WHAT'S GOING ON? FIRST ONE BALES OUT, AND NOW THE OTHER BLOKE'S SCARPING IN THE PLANE

DICK'S VOICE CRACKLED URGENTLY IN PADDY'S HEADPHONES



D'YOU SEE WHAT I SEE, SKIP? HE'S PELTING FLAT OUT FOR THAT CLOUD BANK, LET'S GET HIM BEFORE HE REACHES IT

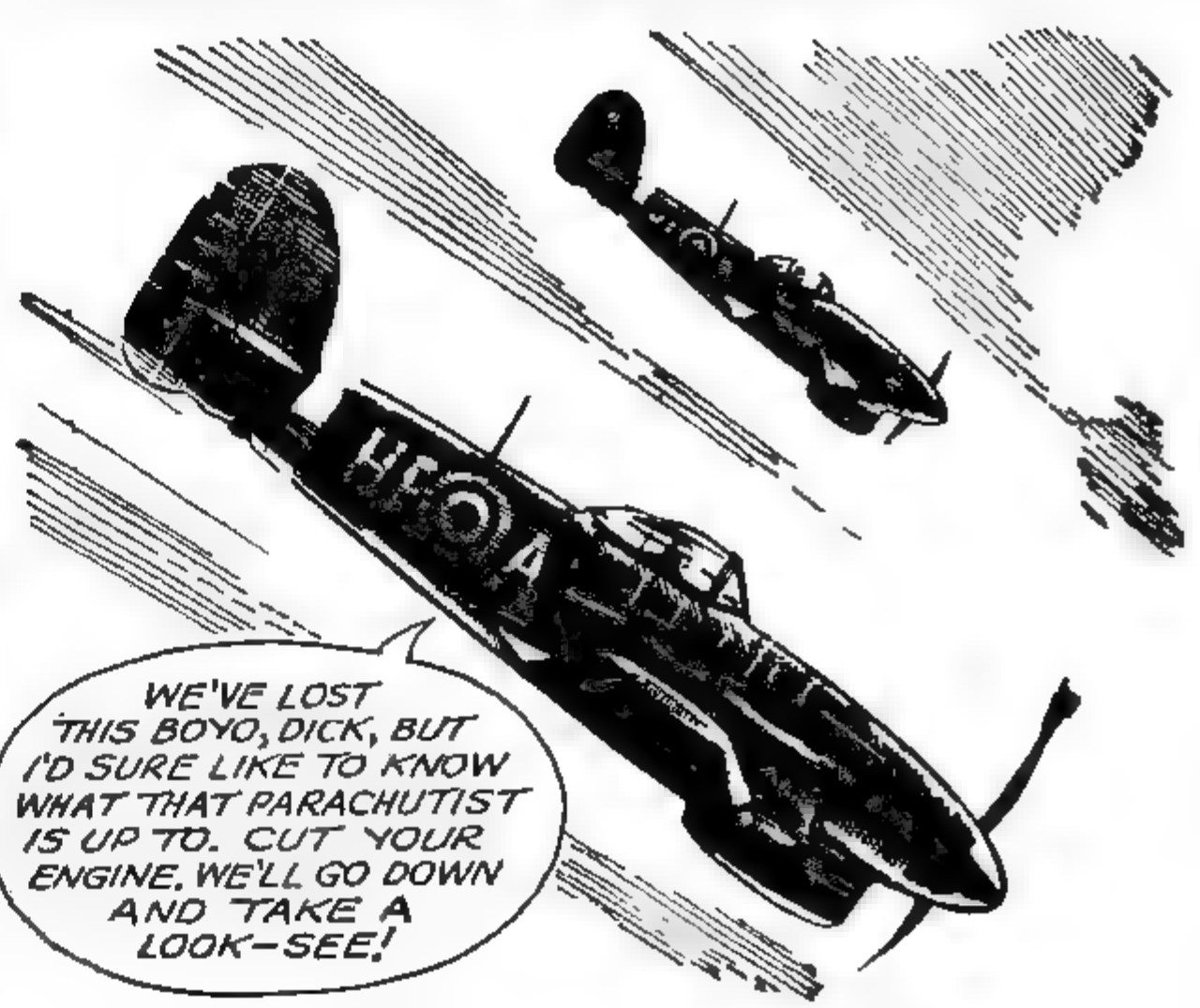
TOGETHER THE PALS SPED IN HOT PURSUIT. BUT—



OF ALL THE LUCK! HE'S BEATEN US TO IT—AND VANISHED

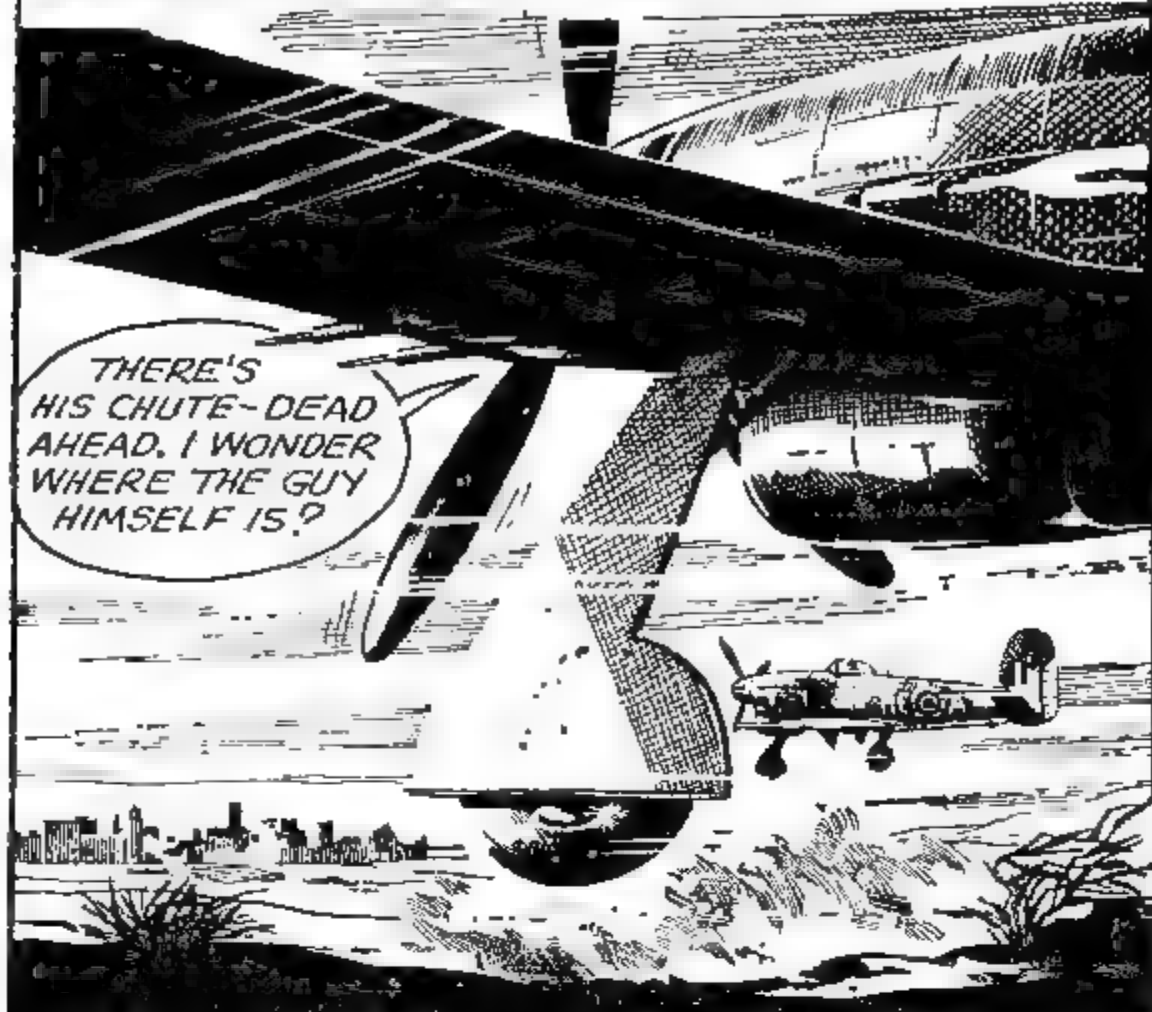
YOU SAID IT, SKIP. WE'D NEED X-RAY EYES TO SPOT HIM IN THIS

SOMETHING ELSE WAS ALSO BOTHERING PADDY



WE'VE LOST THIS BOYO, DICK, BUT I'D SURE LIKE TO KNOW WHAT THAT PARACHUTIST IS UP TO. CUT YOUR ENGINE, WE'LL GO DOWN AND TAKE A LOOK—SEE!

SILENTLY THE TWO AIRCRAFT SANK TOWARDS THE OUTSKIRTS OF A RUINED DESERT CITY



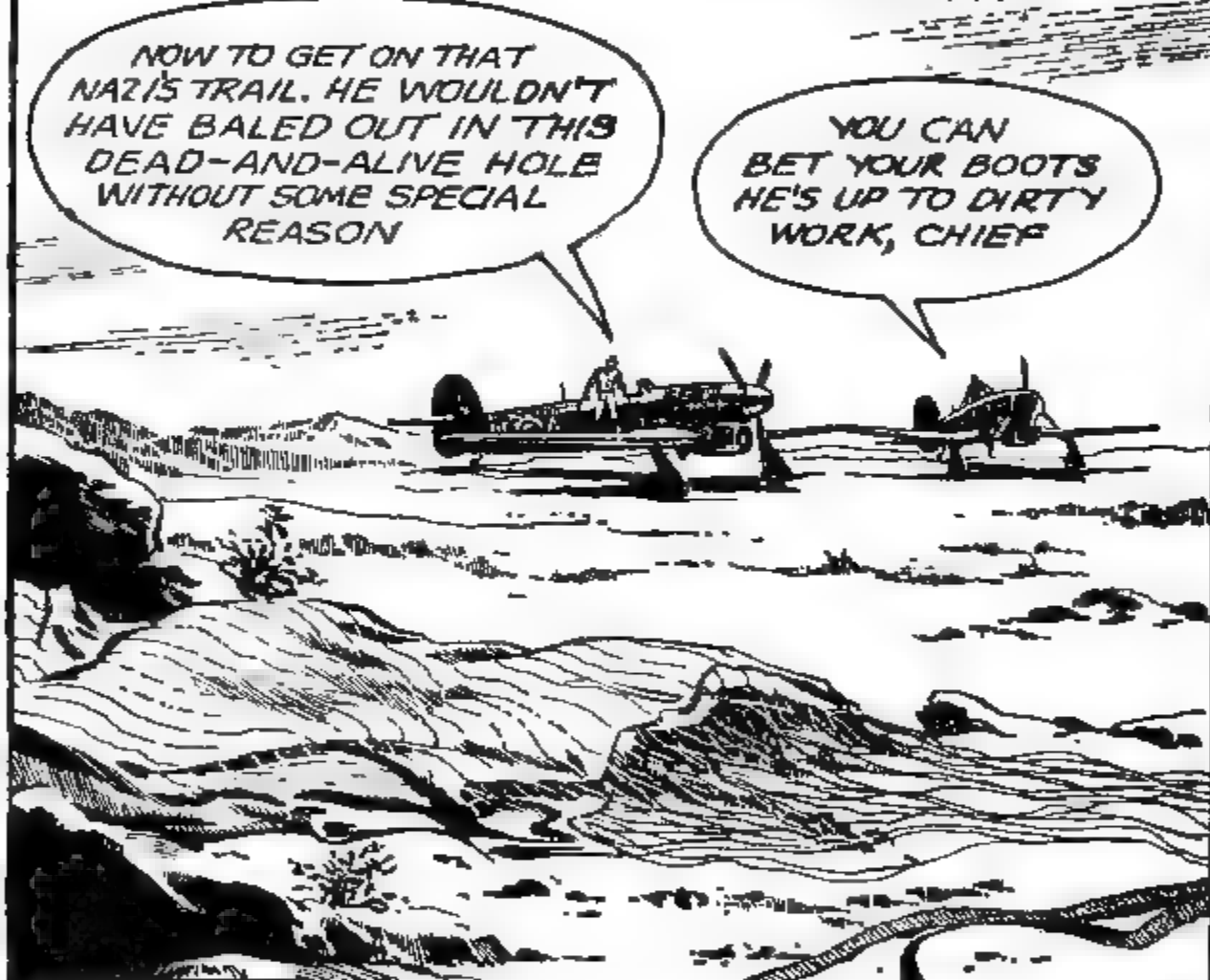
THERE'S HIS CHUTE- DEAD AHEAD. I WONDER WHERE THE GUY HIMSELF IS?

LURCHING AND SKIDDING OVER THE RUBBLE-STREWN SAND, THE AIRCRAFT TOUCHED DOWN



WHOOPS - WHAT A SWITCHBACK! STILL, SO FAR SO GOOD!

PADDY AND DICK LEAPT LITHELY FROM THEIR COCKPITS



NOW TO GET ON THAT NAZI'S TRAIL. HE WOULDN'T HAVE BALED OUT IN THIS DEAD-AND-ALIVE HOLE WITHOUT SOME SPECIAL REASON

YOU CAN BET YOUR BOOTS HE'S UP TO DIRTY WORK, CHIEF



HERE ARE HIS FOOTPRINTS. C'MON - WE'LL FOLLOW 'EM

TOGETHER THEY DARTED AROUND SOME CRUMBLING COLUMNS, AND --



SO THAT'S WHERE HE'S GONE TO GROUND - IN THAT OLD MOSQUE!

PRESS ON, PAL. THIS WHOLE SET-UP IS MIGHTY FISHY. WHAT THE BLAZES CAN HE WANT IN THERE?

SOUNDLESSLY THE R.A.F. FLYERS CREPT TOWARDS THE AGED, SAND-SCARRED BUILDING



SET COURSE FOR THAT WINDOW. WE'LL TAKE A PEEP INSIDE. BE CAREFUL, THOUGH. WE DON'T WANT TO RUN INTO A TRAP

PADDY AND DICK PEERED THROUGH THE NARROW OPENING, AND --



SUFFERING SPITFIRES - JUST AS I THOUGHT! WE'VE STUMBLERD ON TO SOMETHING REALLY BIG!

THEY SAW THAT THE NAZI THEY'D TRAILED WAS TALKING URGENTLY WITH SOME SINISTER-LOOKING ARABS

THEY'RE GIVING HIM INFORMATION, AND HE'S WRITING IT ALL DOWN. WELL, I'M HANGED!



THE NAZI NODDED WITH SATISFACTION

SO NO. 3 BRITISH TANK REGIMENT HAS MOVED TO BAKKRA, AND 20 MORE BOMBERS ARRIVED AT ROLFI AIRFIELD LAST WEEK. EXCELLENT. THESE DETAILS WILL BE OF THE GREATEST VALUE TO THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND!



HERE'S YOUR MONEY, MEIN FRIEND. AND WE'LL PAY YOU PLENTY MORE IF YOU CAN FIND OUT FURTHER DETAILS. NOW, I'LL REMAIN HERE UNTIL MY PLANE COMES TO PICK ME UP AT DUSK



WE ARE AT YOUR SERVICE, EFFENDI

PADDY'S FACE SET GRIMLY

SO THAT'S IT! THE ENEMY HAVE HIRED THOSE ARAB THUGS TO SPY FOR THEM! GOSH, IF THAT NAZI GETS THIS TOP-SECRET GEN BACK TO HIS H.Q., OUR ARMY BOYS WILL BE RIGHT IN THE SOUP! WE'VE GOT TO STOP HIM!



LITTLE DID THE PALS REALISE THAT THEY HAD BEEN SEEN BY OTHER ARABS!

PRYING INGLES! SNOOPERS HAVE DISCOVERED OUR SECRET MEETING PLACE!

BUT THEY SHALL NEVER LIVE TO TELL THEIR TALE. KILL THEM!



PADDY HEARD THEM COMING, HOWEVER, WHIPPED ROUND—AND TOOK A FLYING KICK AT A PILE OF PEBBLES AND SAND!

NO, YOU DON'T, YOU TWO-TIMING MARAUDERS!



AAAH! I CAN'T SEE!

WITH FLYING FISTS THE PALS PITCHED INTO THE STARTLED ARABS

ATTABOY, PADDY-LAD. SHOOT 'EM DOWN IN FLAMES!



THE SOUND OF THE SCRAP BROUGHT THE NAZI AND THE DESERT SPIES RUNNING OUT

HIMMEL! THOSE BRITISH PILOTS HAVE TRACKED ME HERE—AND OTHERS MUST BE NEARBY. BUT THEY WON'T STOP ME GETTING YOUR INFORMATION TO H.Q. SAVE YOURSELVES, MEN!

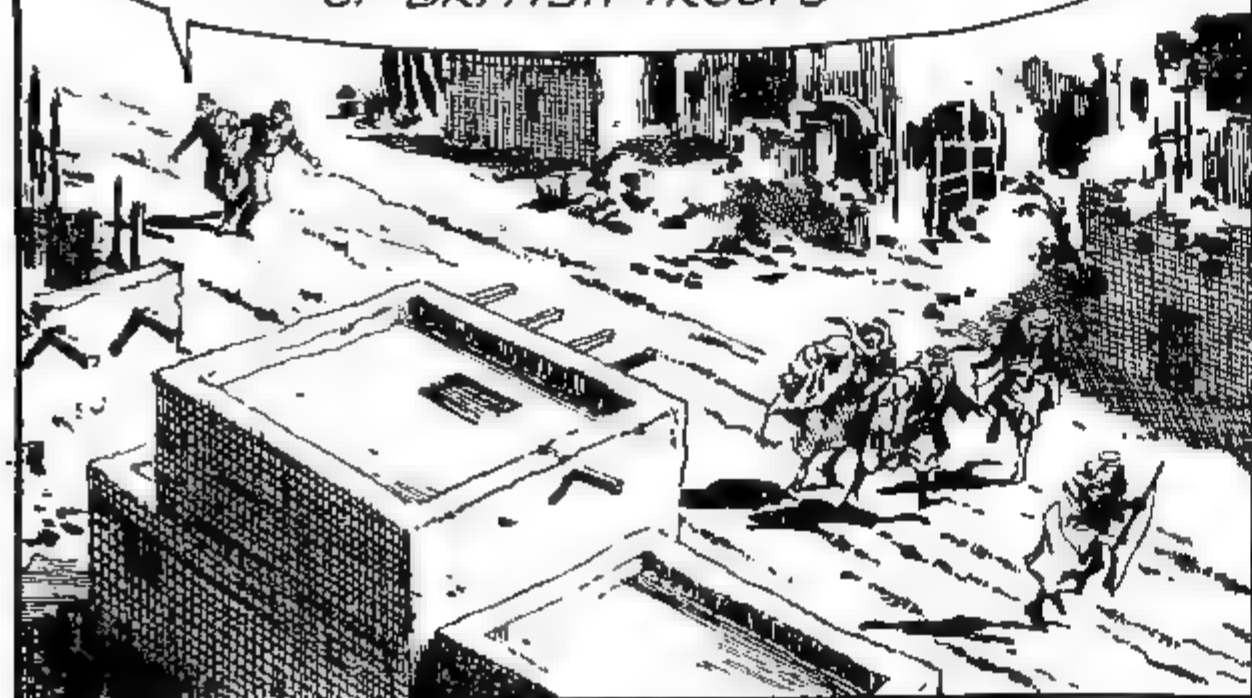


THE EFFENDI SPEAKS THE TRUTH! THEY WOULD NOT DARE TO COME WITHOUT OTHER WHITE INFIDELS. LET US ESCAPE, BROTHERS, BEFORE WE ARE SURROUNDED!



DICK STARTED TO CHASE THEM-- BUT SUDDENLY PADDY PULLED HIM BACK

JUST A SEC. WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE NAZI? HE'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN ALL THE REST PUT TOGETHER. AT ALL COST WE MUST PREVENT HIM FROM MAKING OFF WITH THAT SECRET INFORMATION! IF IT GETS INTO THE CLUTCHES OF THE ENEMY HIGH COMMAND, IT MAY CAUSE THE DEATH OF THOUSANDS OF BRITISH TROOPS



THEN DICK UTTERED A GASP



JUMPING JACKRABBITS-- THERE HE IS! AND HE'S SET FIRE TO MY KITE!

THE NAZI YELLED TRIUMPHANTLY AS HE NOW DASHED MADLY TOWARDS PADDY'S PLANE



THAT'S TURNED THE TABLES ON THE MEDDLING ENGLANDERS! I'LL FLY THE OTHER AIRCRAFT BACK TO MY SQUADRON AND LEAVE THE FOOLS STRANDED!

BUT THE PALS WERE MAKING A BREAKNECK BID TO FOIL THE ENEMY AIRMAN'S SCHEME



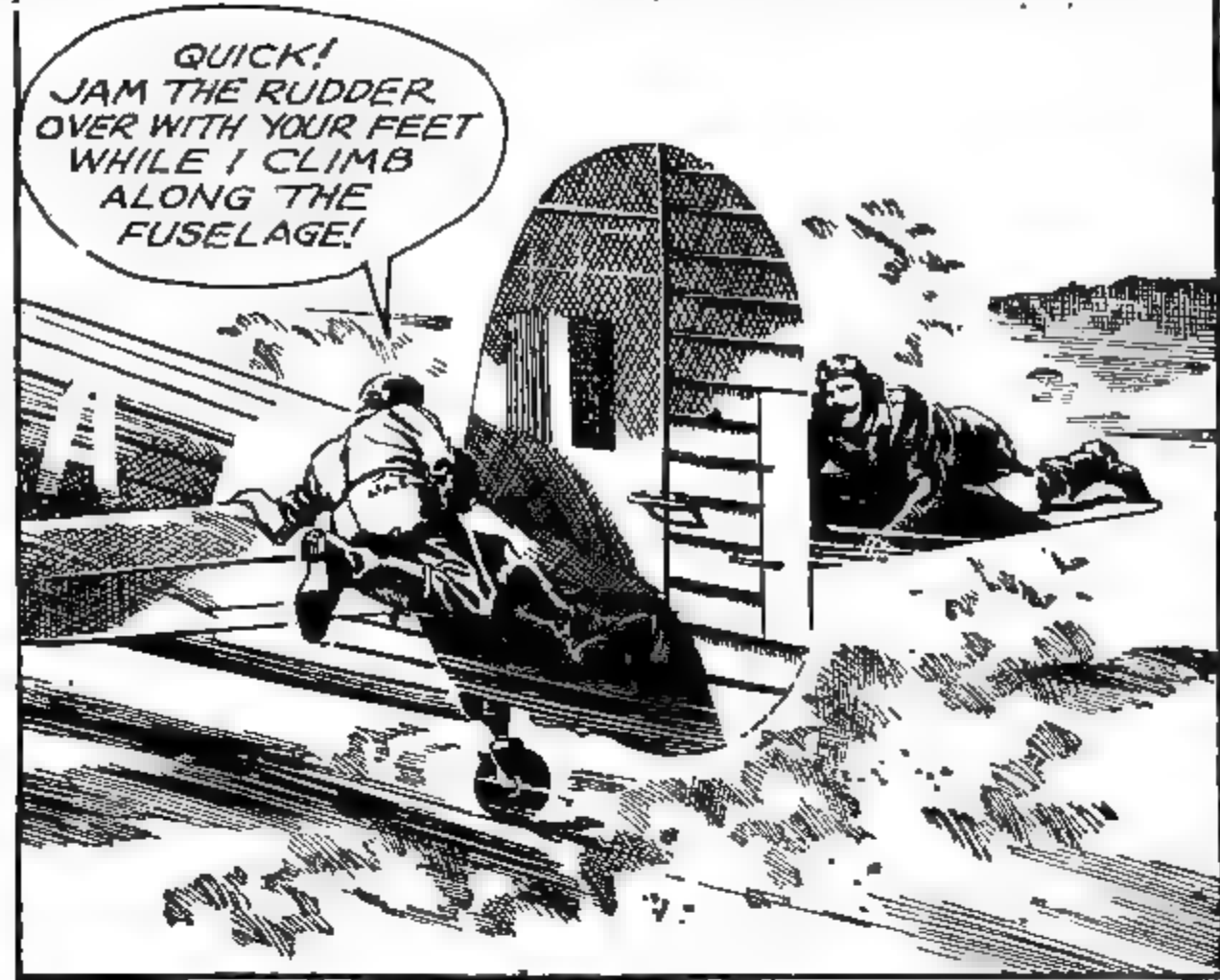
GEE--HE'LL BE TAKING OFF IN A JIFFY UNLESS WE CAN GET AT HIM!

THE NAZI SWERVED PADDY'S PLANE VICIOUSLY TOWARDS THE TWO BRITISHERS



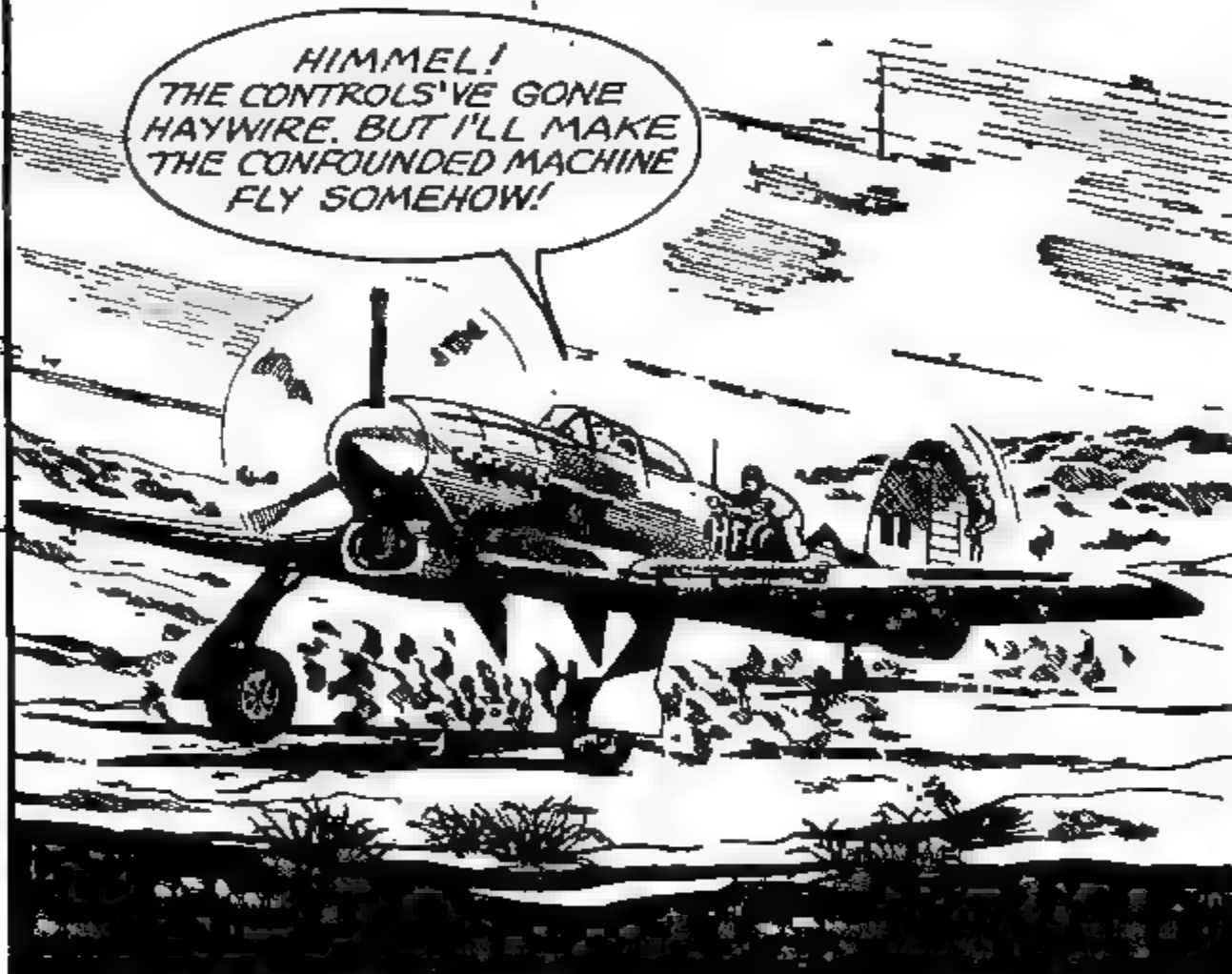
MIND THE PROP, DICK, OR IT'LL HACK YOU TO PIECES!

NEXT SECOND THE PALS HAD HURLED THEMSELVES ON TO THE TAILPLANE



QUICK! JAM THE RUDDER OVER WITH YOUR FEET WHILE I CLIMB ALONG THE FUSELAGE!

RUDDER ASKEW, THE PLANE STARTED TO CAREER WILDLY



HIMMEL! THE CONTROLS'VE GONE HAYWIRE. BUT I'LL MAKE THE CONFOUNDED MACHINE FLY SOMEHOW!

INCH BY INCH THE STEEL-NERVED BRITISH PILOT WORKED HIS WAY FORWARD



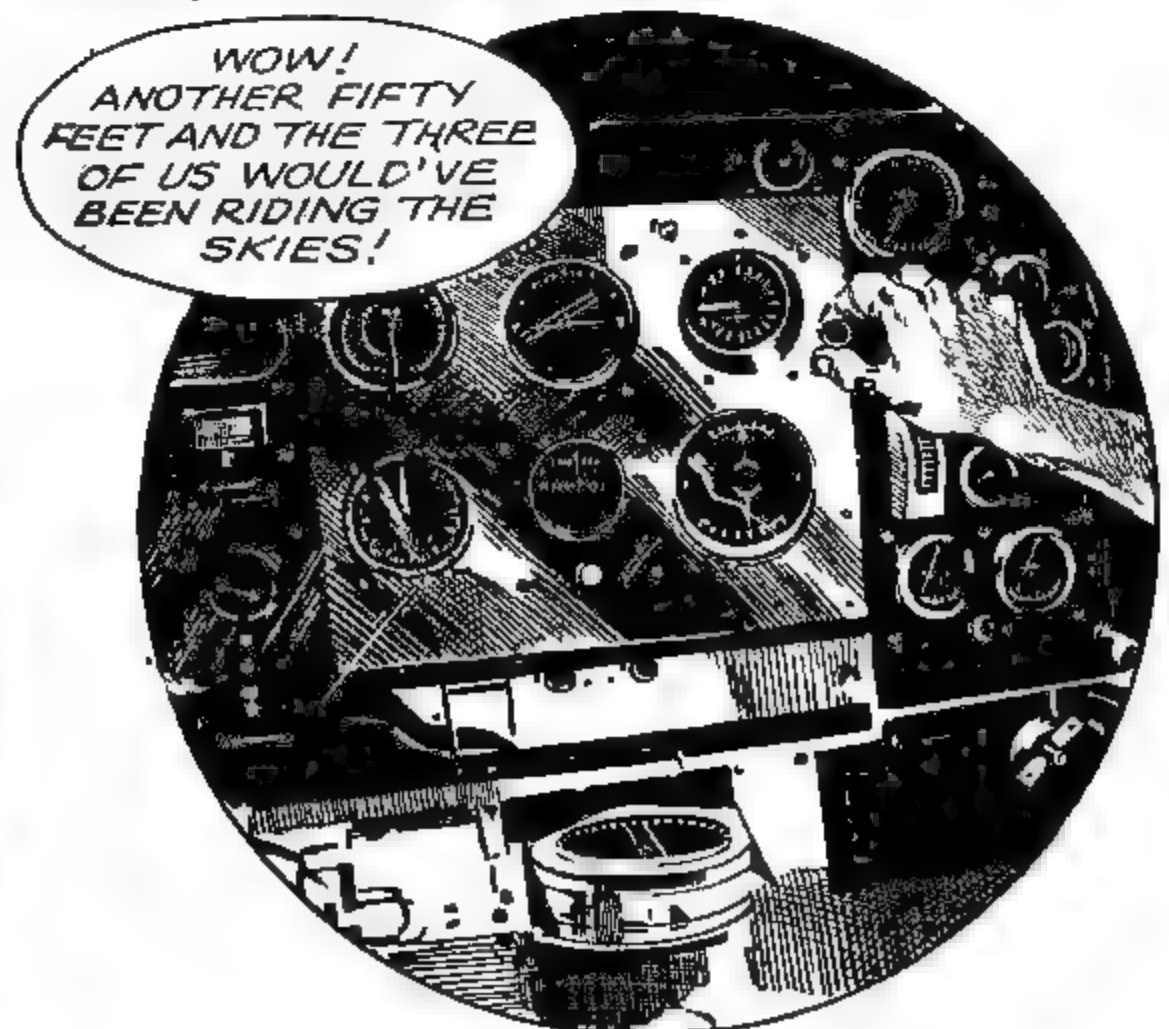
I'VE GOT TO STOP HIM GETTING AWAY WITH THAT TOP-SECRET INFORMATION. IT'S VITAL!

AT LAST PADDY'S GROPING FINGERS GRIPPED THE CANOPY AND HAULED IT BACK WITH ONE LIGHTNING MOVEMENT, THEN--



HERE'S SOMETHING TO REMEMBER THE R.A.F. BY, YOU THIEVING SQUAREHEAD!

THE ACE PILOT'S NEXT MOVE WAS TO SWITCH OFF THE AIRCRAFT'S ENGINE



WOW! ANOTHER FIFTY FEET AND THE THREE OF US WOULD'VE BEEN RIDING THE SKIES!

THE PLANE SLEWED TO A HALT IN A SHOWER OF SAND

NICE
WORK, SKIPPER!
I THOUGHT WE WERE
ALL SET FOR THE BIG
THUMP



THE DAZED NAZI WAS DRAGGED FROM THE COCKPIT--AT THE POINT OF A FLARE GUN

OUT YOU
COME, FRITZ--THIS IS
THE END OF THE LINE!
YOU'VE GOT SOME SECRET
GEN ON YOU--AND WE
WANT IT--PRONTO!



PADDY REACHED INSIDE THE PRISONER'S TUNIC, AND HIS FINGERS CLOSED ON THE MAN'S NOTEBOOK

HERE IT
IS, BY JIMINY!
YOUR PRECIOUS
HIGH COMMAND'LL
NEVER KNOW WHAT
THEY MISSED,
FRITZ!



PADDY HAD NOT FINISHED YET

KEEP HIM HERE, DICK.
I'M GOING TO ROUND UP
THOSE ARAB SPIES. THEY'RE
A MENACE TO THE ALLIED WAR
EFFORT WHILE THEY'RE
STILL AT LARGE



WITHIN SECONDS THE FAMOUS PILOT WAS SCREAMING SKYWARDS

GO IT,
SKIP--TEACH THOSE
DOUBLE-CROSSING
'DESERT BANDITS' A
LESSON THEY'LL
NEVER FORGET



PADDY CUT CLEAN ACROSS THE ARABS' PATH LIKE AN AVENGING WHIRLWIND!

FASTEN
YOUR SAFETY
BELTS, AMIGOS--
YOU'RE REALLY
GOING TO
NEED 'EM!



ANOTHER SCORCHING TURN, AND PADDY WAS APPROACHING AT ZERO FEET



JOYFULLY DICK WATCHED THE EFFECT OF HIS PAL'S DARING AERIAL MANOEUVRE



WHEN PADDY LANDED, DICK HAD THE SITUATION WELL UNDER CONTROL



AND SO A STRANGE "CARAVAN" WAS SOON WENDING ITS WAY TOWARDS THE BRITISH LINES



CIRCLING ABOVE, PADDY TRIUMPHANTLY SHEPHERDED HIS FLOCK HOMEWARDS



The *RIDDLE* of the KWAN YIN JINX

BY
JAMES
HOOPER



A BOMB IN THE ENGINE ROOM

THE pearling lugger Kwan Yin rocked gently at anchor in the mouth of Kwunloon Creek. Hugh Whittaker, assistant make-up man of Anglo-Auster Films, sat on the engine-room hatch. Beside him, lying on his back, eyes shut against the sun's glare, was his friend Rusty Latimer, a cameraman.

"Do you believe there's a jinx on this ship?" Rusty was saying, his freckled face creased in a frown.

"No, I don't!" Hugh replied firmly. "And neither do you. That's only what these Chinese extras believe. A more superstitious bunch I've never met!"

He looked forward along the deck to a confusion of cameras, cables, technicians and actors waiting for the next sequence to be shot—for the Kwan Yin had been hired for a film of the great pearling days.

Dan Knurlsen, the director, was obviously having trouble with the Chinese extras. He was waving his arms and shouting at the reluctant, muttering men.

"Just the same," Rusty insisted, "it's hard to explain some of the things that have happened.

We've had more than just ordinary bad luck—and you know it, Hugh. The Chinese say there's a jinx on us—and if they get really scared and refuse to work for us, we're really in trouble."

Rusty was interrupted by Hugh grabbing his arm. The make-up man had his head up and was sniffing the air intently.

"I smell burning!" he snapped out. "By thunder, Rusty, there's fire below!"

Fire! One of the most dreaded words aboard a ship. Rusty leapt to his feet, shouting a warning. Hugh was already hurtling like a cannon-ball down the engine-room ladder.

The gleaming engines were silent and still. A spiral of thin black smoke led Hugh to a corner behind a tangle of pipes, where a trail of charred rag on the floor told its own story. The smouldering end of the rag fuse disappeared into a crude wooden box. A home-made bomb!

Hugh picked up the box and saw at once that the fuse was too short to pull out. There was no time to lose. At any second the bomb might explode, blowing the Kwan Yin and all aboard her to glory!

The bomb in his hands, Hugh raced for the ladder.

What was the Explanation of the Sinister Happenings Aboard the Chinese Ship?

"Out of the way!" he yelled at his startled friend.

On deck he pushed Rusty aside and, with all his strength, hurled the fiendish contraption as far out to sea as he could.

"Duck, everybody! Get down!" he shouted to the film crew and extras milling about, as the box whirled in a wide arc over the blue water.

All around him people flung themselves flat to the deck. Then the bomb struck the water and exploded. There was a sound like a clap of thunder, and flying spray fountained up, to drench everybody on deck.

The Kwan Yin rocked in the shock waves. After a long, stunned silence, high, wailing sounds of fear came from the Chinese coolies as they picked themselves up. In vain the director and his assistants tried to hold them back; the scared, superstitious orientals clambered over the side into their small boats and began to row for the shore.

"That does it!" Dan Knurlsen said disgustedly. He was pale and shaken, as were his crew. "They all think it's further evidence that there's a jinx on the ship. There'll be no more work today. Maybe none tomorrow. And the monsoons break in two weeks. If we don't get the picture finished before then—" He paused. Then he turned to Hugh. "Hugh, what the heck *was* that thing, anyway?"

"A crude kind of bomb, Mr Knurlsen," Hugh said evenly.

"A bomb? Great catfish! Who hates us as much as that? Well, this settles it. I'm going into Kwunloon in the motor launch to see the chief of police. The other queer things that have happened—the minor attempts at sabotage—could be just maliciousness on someone's part. But this is attempted murder!"

The director turned away, then looked back at Hugh.

"We owe you a vote of thanks. Good work!"

Then he was gone over the side into the waiting launch.

Left alone, Hugh and Rusty gazed out over the sea. Not a ripple showed where the bomb had exploded. Then Hugh's sharp eyes spotted something bobbing up and down in the water.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "I think that's a piece of wood from the bomb! And something about that box struck me as familiar when I picked it up—though I certainly didn't have time to figure it out then. But I think we'd better have a dekko at that piece of wood!"

Kicking off his shoes, he stood poised for a second on the ship's side, then dived cleanly and with hardly a splash.

"Ware sharks!" called Rusty anxiously, leaning over the rail. He scanned the water, but for once there was no ominous black fin in sight.

Just the same, Rusty didn't breathe freely again

until he was lending a ready hand to haul Hugh back on deck.

"Now let's see what we've got!" Hugh panted.

The prize was a piece of boxwood crudely stamped with Chinese characters in red dye, which had already begun to run in the water.

Hugh stared at it—then uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Gosh! Doesn't something about this ring a bell, Rusty?"

"Yes—I've seen boxes like that before. Su Chung gets his tinned meat in them. There are a lot like that in his storeroom at the inn!"

As one man, the pals turned to gaze shorewards.

On a low bluff stood Su Chung's inn—where the entire film company, apart from the crew of the lugger, were staying.

"Do you suppose Su Chung has anything to do with the jinx?" Rusty said incredulously. "He seemed as pleased as Punch when we moved into his inn, for we brought him in a lot of business."

"I don't know if Su Chung's behind it or not," Hugh said grimly. "But I mean to find out. From now on we're not going to let him out of our sight!"

"Then we'll be pretty busy!" Rusty answered dryly. "He goes out every night—into Kwunloon, I suppose, it's the only place to go to on this forsaken island."

"Okay—then we'll follow him. From now on, Rusty, where he goes, we go! Come on, let's get back to the inn!"

As the friends rowed ashore in the dinghy, Rusty protested, "He'll spot us a mile away if we tail him into Kwunloon. A white man is certain to be noticed among all those yellow faces."

"You let the camouflage department take care of that," Hugh chuckled as he pulled at the oars. "I'm not a make-up man for nothing. When I've finished with you, you'll look as Chinese as a bowl of rice!"

IN THE LAIR OF THE TONG

HUGH was as good as his word. That night he took out his make-up box and skilfully went to work, first on Rusty, then on himself.

From the film wardrobe Rusty had borrowed two outfits of the faded blue jacket and trousers which were the universal wear of the Chinese working men.

When Hugh had finished, both he and Rusty were black-haired, slit-eyed, and olive-skinned.

"Unworthy selves will pass in crowd, in own poor estimation," Hugh chanted. Then he resumed his normal voice and snapped, "Let's go! With luck, we'll now solve the mystery of the Kwan Yin jinx!"

Following Su Chung was tiring work. The plump, middle-aged inn-keeper put on a surprising turn of speed as he trotted along the shadowy, moon-lit jungle track towards Kwunloon.

Some distance behind, Hugh and Rusty slipped

silently from one patch of shadow to another.

"Gosh, he can step it out for an old 'un!" panted Rusty in a whisper.

"Practice, chum. I'd like to know what's important enough to bring him out every night like this. Come on—let's close up a little. There are the lights of the town. We don't want to lose him now!"

Su Chung never looked round. He hurried on through a maze of narrow streets, filled with jostling Chinese and Malays. The chums dodged along, hard put to it not to lose sight of their quarry.

At last, in a deserted, unlit alleyway, Su Chung stopped before a red-painted door. He stopped so suddenly that Hugh and Rusty only just had time to duck back into a dark recess before the Chinese glanced cautiously up and down the street.

Evidently satisfied it was deserted, he gave a series of knocks on the door—a double knock, followed by a triple, then another double.

The door opened and Su Chung glided in. The door shut behind him and the alley was as quiet as the grave.

There was a pause, then Hugh said quietly, "Well, there's only one way to find out what it's all about. I'm going in there!"

"Don't be a fool!" Rusty exploded in a whisper. "You don't know what might be behind that door."

"No, I don't, do I? And I never will know unless I go beyond it. Get back to the inn, Rusty. If I don't join you there in an hour, you can bring some of the others to look for the pieces!"

Before Rusty could protest any more, Hugh slipped away.

He took a deep breath as he gave the same signal knock as Su Chung.

The door opened. In the dim light a small, wizened Chinese in servant's dress stood back to let Hugh enter. So the signal knock was good enough! No password required, Hugh thought.

He bowed politely as he stepped inside. With a sinking feeling he heard the door being bolted behind him. Too late to back out now, whatever lay ahead!

The servant waved a hand towards a silk curtained archway. Hugh walked steadily towards the curtain and pulled it aside.

He was looking into a dimly-lit room thick with the scent of joss-sticks.

A carved chair, heavily gilded and painted, stood on a dais, flanked by five-foot high candle sconces of heavy brass.

The walls were hung with silken curtains. A dozen or so Chinese stood about in groups in the gloom, talking to each other in a low, murmured sing-song.

Hugh began to realise what he had got into, and in spite of himself his limbs felt suddenly stiff and cold.

He spotted Su Chung standing alone near the dais. He looked nervous and ill-at-ease.

"He looks scared," thought Hugh, "but I'll bet he isn't half as scared as I am!"

Hugh retreated into the farthest, darkest corner and stood with head lowered. Behind his back he could feel the wall, solid behind its silk hangings.

He knew now that he was in the meeting chamber of a tong—the dreaded secret societies which terrorise Chinese communities everywhere! Ruthless in the pursuit of their interest—secure because their members know the punishment for betrayal is—death.

There was the low, sonorous sound of a gong being struck, and the curtain behind the dais parted to admit an elderly man. He was obviously the chief of the tong. He sat in the chair, answering with a brief nod the deep, respectful bows of the suddenly silenced gathering.

Hugh took his cue from the rest and bowed too, then remained with lowered head.

The chief—a wealthy man, to judge by his embroidered jacket—was speaking. In front of him stood Su Chung, head hanging, hands twisting together nervously. The inn-keeper was being reprimanded for some failure or misdemeanour.

Hugh understood only a phrase here and there—enough to tell him that the clue to the mystery of the jinx was something valuable that lay hidden on the sea bottom—right underneath the spot where the Kwan Yin was anchored!

Straining to make out what was being said, Hugh gathered that this valuable cache must be recovered before the monsoons began, and the storms and swollen currents of the creek made diving impossible.

"So their deadline is the same as ours," Hugh thought grimly.

Su Chung had been entrusted by the tong with the job of getting the film people out of the way. He had bungled it. Was he to be dealt with immediately according to the savage rules of the tong—or given one more chance?

"We will put it to the vote, as is our custom," said the chief.

The wizened old servant appeared with a stone jar and began to move about among the members. Hugh could see he gave to each one a black and a white disc—for casting a vote, for or against the wretched Su Chung.

Hugh pressed back into his corner, but he knew the game was up. Desperately he looked about for a way out.

The servant halted in front of Hugh and felt in the jar for two more discs to give him. Then the old man paused, startled. Hugh guessed the reason—the jar was empty—and yet here was one more member than there were voting discs!

The old man called out in a high, quavering voice of alarm.

"Masters—there is a spy among us!"

Even as he spoke, Hugh acted.

He knew the wall behind him was solid, and the door to the alley way bolted. That left only one way out he could try—the one the chairman had entered through!

As confusion broke out, Hugh put his head down and charged towards the dais. Hands grabbed at him, and he fought them off desperately. He was making a bid for his life now, and he knew it.

He heard the cloth of his jacket rip, and something hard struck him a blow on the side of the head that made him reel for a moment, dazed.

All round him voices shrilled and shouted in unintelligible fury.

Then Hugh was up on the dais, grabbing one of the tall candle sconces and whirling it round and round him like a battle axe.

The candles flickered out and the heavy stick cleared a space round Hugh as it felled one after another of his assailants.

The chief of the tong cried out as his chair went toppling.

Hugh dropped his weapon and hurled himself through the curtains. He was in a bare corridor. Moonlight gleamed through a window at his side. Without hesitation he put an arm across his face and dived through the window, bracing himself for the shock of breaking glass.

But the window was an old-fashioned one, of parchment stretched on wooden laths. The violence of Hugh's leap took him through it like a stone through tissue paper.

He had expected to come crashing down on the cobbled street. But his breath was forced out of his body when he hit cold, black water instead.

He sank, gasping, and when he surfaced, shaking water out of his eyes, he saw that he was in a narrow canal, which must run into the harbour. The building he had jumped from was one of many warehouses along the banks.

Even as Hugh's head broke the surface, there was a shout from the bank and a knife flashed past him and hissed into the water.

Thinking quickly, he gave a loud, agonised cry and took one quick, deep breath before sinking deep into the black, evil-smelling water.

"Let's hope that fools them," he murmured, striking out against the current. "If they think I'm dead they'll call off the chase."

THE BATTLE ON THE BEACH

IT was some time later that a wet, dirty and foot-sore figure stepped into Dan Knurlsen's room at Su Chung's inn.

Three people looked up from the table where they

were grouped. They were Rusty, still in his Chinese disguise but minus his wig, Dan Knurlsen himself, and a man who, going by his uniform, was high in the ranks of the local police.

"Hugh!" Rusty exclaimed. "Thank goodness you're safe! We were just going to organise a search party."

"No need—but we've got to organise something else—and pretty quick," said Hugh, closing the shutters behind him. "Let me get some dry clothes on and I'll put you in the picture."

Hugh's teeth were chattering. He was chilled right through.

As he dried himself and was found fresh clothing, he rapidly told the others what had happened.

The police chief looked grave.

"Mr. Knurlsen has told me of the strange happenings aboard the Kwan Yin," he said, "and he wishes me to take action. If what you say is true, a tong is undoubtedly behind these incidents—and I am in a difficult position. From your description, the chief sounds like a wealthy merchant called Mr. Hsui, of whom we have long had suspicions. But people are afraid to bear witness against a tong—and before the police can act, we must have proof—proof that cannot be denied."

"We'll get you proof," Hugh answered grimly. "This is my plan. . . ."

* * * * *

The next day the few Chinese extras still working on the Kwan Yin were paid off. Su Chung was told that rooms would no longer be required at his inn, that the company was pulling out, unable to face the "bad luck" that had dogged them.

The face of the Chinese was impassive as he received the news. If it rejoiced him, he didn't show it as he expressed polite regrets.

Before sunset, the Kwan Yin had raised anchor and sailed away round the point.

The creek was now empty of any vessel for the first time in three weeks. And from a vantage point on high ground, overlooking the creek mouth, Rusty and Hugh waited.

Rusty was surrounded by certain equipment borrowed with Dan Knurlsen's permission from the film company's stock. Hugh was once again in the disguise of a Chinese.

"They'll move in tonight—they must!" Hugh whispered. "And then we'll discover exactly what's behind the jinx on the Kwan Yin!"

It was past midnight when the patience of more watchers than just Rusty and Hugh was rewarded. There was the muffled creak of an oar, and a sampan came gliding out of the shadows of the shore almost directly below the pals' hiding-place.

One man stood at the rear of the shallow, native boat, poling it along.

At the spot where the Kwan Yin had lain, a diver

emerged from under the canvas hood. He had a rope coiled round and round his body, and he slipped silently over the side into the water.

Before long he surfaced and climbed back on board, bringing the end of the rope.

He and the oarsman hauled on the line, and a heavy metal chest appeared, gleaming as the water ran off it.

"Okay, Rusty," Hugh whispered. "Let's get down to the welcome party on the shore."

On the narrow strip of sand, several men were waiting impatiently, Su Chung among them, looking out to where the sampan was beginning its return journey.

Hugh helped Rusty to settle himself and his gear behind some rocks, then whispered, "I'm off to do my share. You know your end of it, Rusty."

"Trust me! Good luck, Hugh!"

Like a shadow Hugh circled round among the rocks behind the strip of beach. He found, behind a clump of trees, a coolie waiting beside an ox-cart.

"That's what they'll carry away the chest on," Hugh thought. "Or so they believe!"

The Chinese had his back to Hugh. He heard nothing till it was too late. Just as Hugh reached him, the coolie whirled round—to meet Hugh's fist,

which connected crisply with his jaw. Uttering a faint groan, the man sank to the ground.

Hugh dragged him into the undergrowth. As an afterthought he picked up the coolie's broad-brimmed hat and jammed it on his own head, thus shading his features. Then he walked boldly down through the clump of trees and over the rocks to the little beach.

It was Su Chung who whirled round furiously.

"Fool!" he hissed in Chinese at Hugh. "Why didn't you stay with the waggon?"

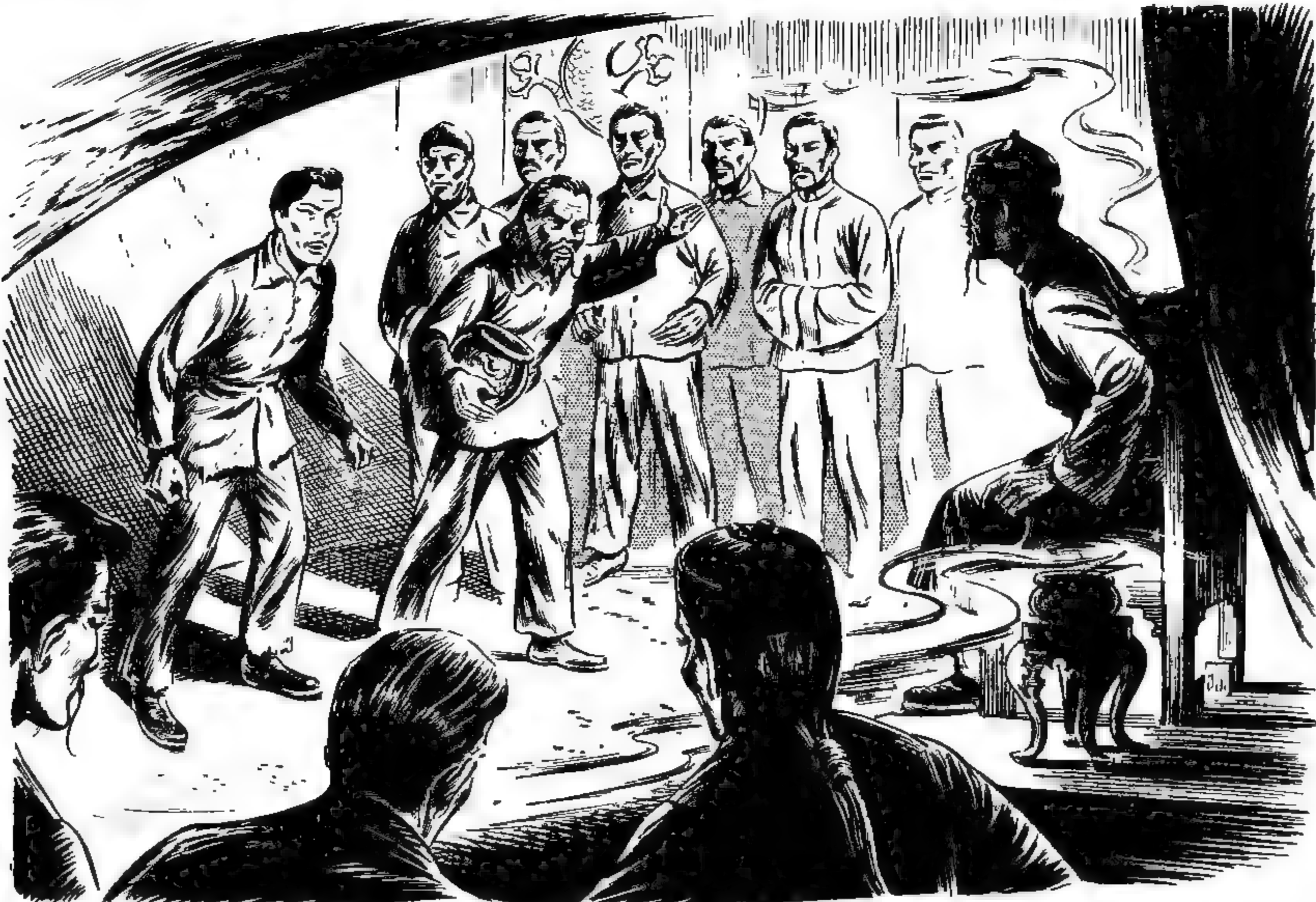
"I feared something had gone wrong," Hugh whispered hoarsely, hoping it would disguise his real voice. He also hoped that the few Chinese phrases which the police chief had taught him were the right ones.

"A good night's work, eh?" Hugh croaked. "Mr. Hsui's eyes will rejoice at the sight of this metal chest"

"It is well," growled Su Chung. "This business has cost me dear. Now silence, fool. Here comes the sampan."

He ran down to the water's edge with the others to haul the boat ashore and Hugh stepped back into the trees. He made for the ox-cart, jumped lightly into the back of it, and crouched down.

Just at that moment shouting broke out from the



The old man called out in a high, quavering voice. "Masters—there is a spy among us!" It now seemed certain that the disguised Hugh would be unmasked by the secret society!

direction of the beach. Police darted from cover, and there was the sound of a revolver shot.

"Here we go! The battle has started!" Hugh muttered.

He tensed himself, and a Chinese who burst from the shelter of the trees and made at a run for the ox-cart was astonished to find himself flung to the ground as Hugh jumped on him.

Hugh and the Chinese grappled desperately on the dusty ground, almost under the hoofs of the startled ox. At last Hugh managed to land a blow on his opponent's chin that sent the Chinese reeling back, to sag unconscious against one of the wooden wheels.

As Hugh shook his head groggily he realised that the police were fighting hand-to-hand with the Chinese crooks. Joyfully Hugh pitched himself into the battle again.

A huge Chinese loomed out of the darkness in front of the young Briton. Hugh heard a snarl of rage, and the other lunged towards him.

Hugh felt the man's hand close around his windpipe. The attacker's other fist swept up, and, even in the gloom, Hugh saw the glitter of a naked blade.

The Chinese crook intended to finish the white man once and for all.

Hugh had only seconds to extricate himself from the other's clutches.

Su Chung's henchman was terrifically strong. Hugh knew he could never break the grasp around his throat. Already he was fighting for breath.

There was only one thing for it.

With startling suddenness, Hugh let himself go limp, and sagged towards the ground. He heard the Chinaman grunt with surprise at the abrupt collapse of his foe.

For a second the man's grip of Hugh's throat relaxed.

It was just what Hugh was waiting for. As he slumped to the ground, he twisted like an eel. Next minute he had grasped the Chinese thug around the knees and lifted with all his might.

With a bone-jolting crash his huge assailant crashed to the ground. But he still had lots of fight left in him. With a cry of rage he leapt to his feet—only to be met with a crushing straight right. That finished it! The Chinese was out cold.

It seemed only seconds, then, before the whole thing was over. Su Chung and his confederates were thrust roughly into the back of the ox-cart, to huddle there, glowering, while the police guns were trained steadily on them.

Su Chung clasped his shoulder.

"What happened to him?" Hugh panted, as he saw the police chief by his side.

"I was compelled to place a bullet in him," the officer said regretfully. "He pulled a knife on me in a most unmannerly way."

Hugh grinned.

"That was the revolver shot I heard! You had fun down there. But what about Rusty? Is he okay? Rusty!" he called loudly.

"Here!" Rusty came plodding up, laden with his mysterious equipment.

The chief of police himself stepped forward to help him with the load.

"Did you carry out our plan okay?" Hugh asked.

"You bet!" Rusty grinned. "Everything that happened on that beach I photographed by infra-red light. The crooks never knew they were being filmed as they beached the sampan and unloaded that chest. And every word they said recorded on tape."

"This is magnificent!" the police chief smiled. "It is evidence no one can break down."

Later, in the main room at the inn, Dan Knurlsen, Rusty and Hugh stood by while the police chief ordered one of his men to break open the waterproof chest with a crowbar.

Soon, packet after packet of what looked like bundles of tea lay on the table.

"Opium!" said the police chief gravely. "An evil racket—but now we can put a stop to it. We recently gave chase to a vessel suspected of smuggling dope near here, but when we caught up with it and searched the ship we found nothing. They must have dropped the chest overboard—and by a fluke, the Kwan Yin was moored right above the spot! No wonder they wanted you out of the way at any cost—so that they could salvage their chest before the monsoons begin."

"That explains the jinx and our 'bad luck,'" Dan Knurlsen agreed. "All the accidents and so on were engineered by the tong to try to get us out of the way. They'd have succeeded, too, if it hadn't been for Hugh and Rusty."

He turned and beamed to the pals.

"I guess the police owe you a debt of thanks," he said. "And so do I! This means we can finish the film without interference. No more jinx—no more hold-ups. You chaps had better turn in. We start shooting at dawn tomorrow!"

Hugh and his pal groaned, then laughed. The adventure had ended well. What more could they ask?

THE END

COLT CODY—RIDER o' the RANGE

BY
BARRY
GORDON

THE WHIPLASH CRACK OF A SIX-GUN ECHOED ACROSS THE PEACEFUL PRAIRIE. TO ACE LAWMAN COLT CODY AND HIS FELLOW RANGERS THE GUNSHOTS SPELT TROUBLE!

THOSE SHOTS
CAME FROM OVER
THE RIDGE YONDER.
FOLLOW ME!



COLT CODY THUNDERED UP A BOULDER-STREWN SLOPE AND PEERED INTO THE GULLY BEYOND

IT'S A WHITE
MAN—WITH A PACK OF
APACHE ON HIS TAIL!
COME ON!



SIX-SHOOTERS BLAZING, THE RANGE RIDERS CHARGED INTO ACTION





SEEING THE DOWN-SWOOPING LAWMEN, THE APACHE DREW UP ABRUPTLY

HOKAYE—MORE WHITE MEN! BACK, MY BROTHERS—THEIR GUNS ARE TOO MANY FOR US!



AS THE INDIANS BEAT A MILLING RETREAT, COLT CODY REINED UP ALONGSIDE THEIR BREATHLESS QUARRY

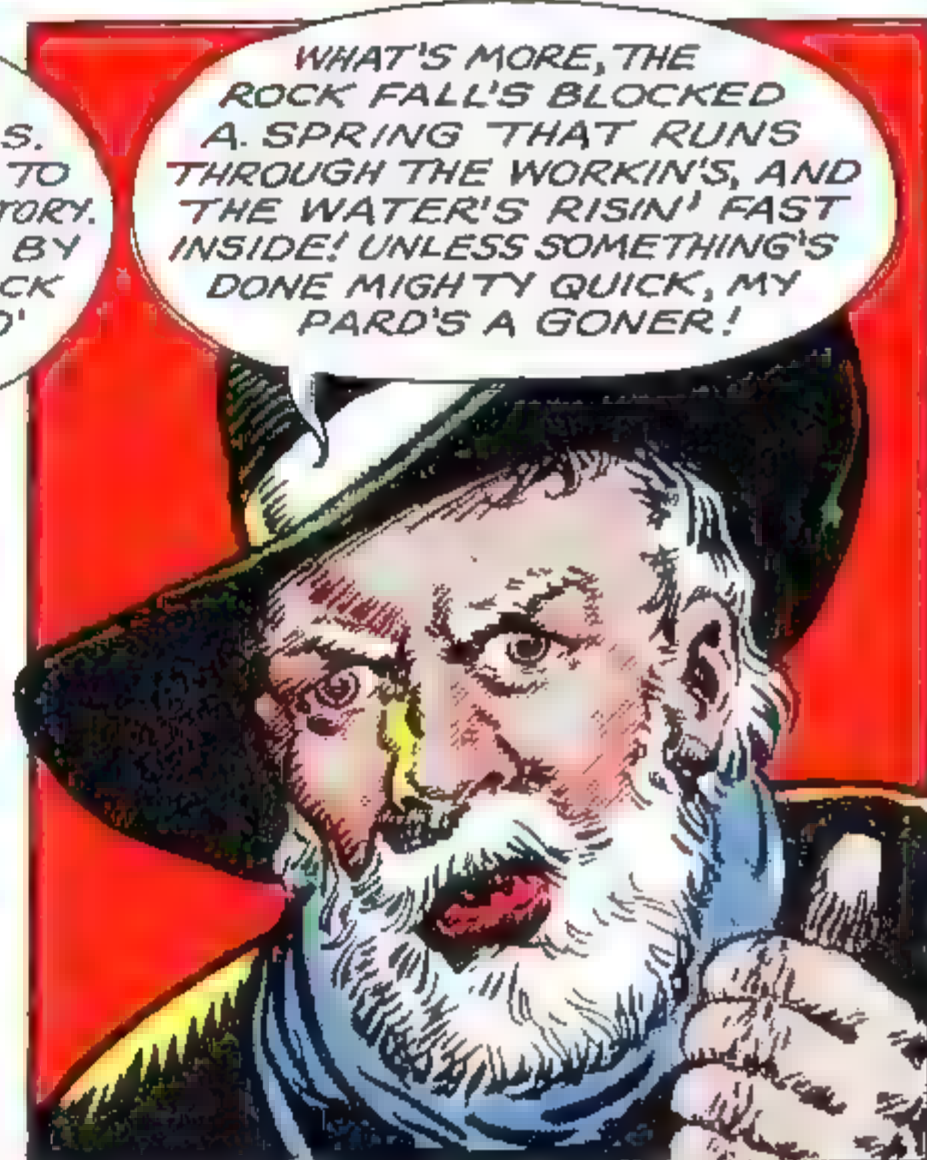
I'D SAY WE ARRIVED JUST AT THE RIGHT MOMENT, OLD TIMER. WHAT WERE THOSE RED COYOTES AFTER?

THEY'RE SOME O' BLACK KNIFE'S MEN, RANGER. I WAS RIDIN' TO TOWN FOR HELP—AND THEY AIMED TO STOP ME GETTIN' THROUGH



YOU WERE RIDING FOR HELP? WHY?

ME AND A PARD WORK A GOLD MINE WAY BACK IN THE HILLS. BLACK KNIFE'S SWORN TO DRIVE US OUT O' HIS TERRITORY. HE'S TRAPPED MY PARD BY BRINGIN' DOWN TONS O' ROCK ACROSS THE MOUTH O' THE MINE

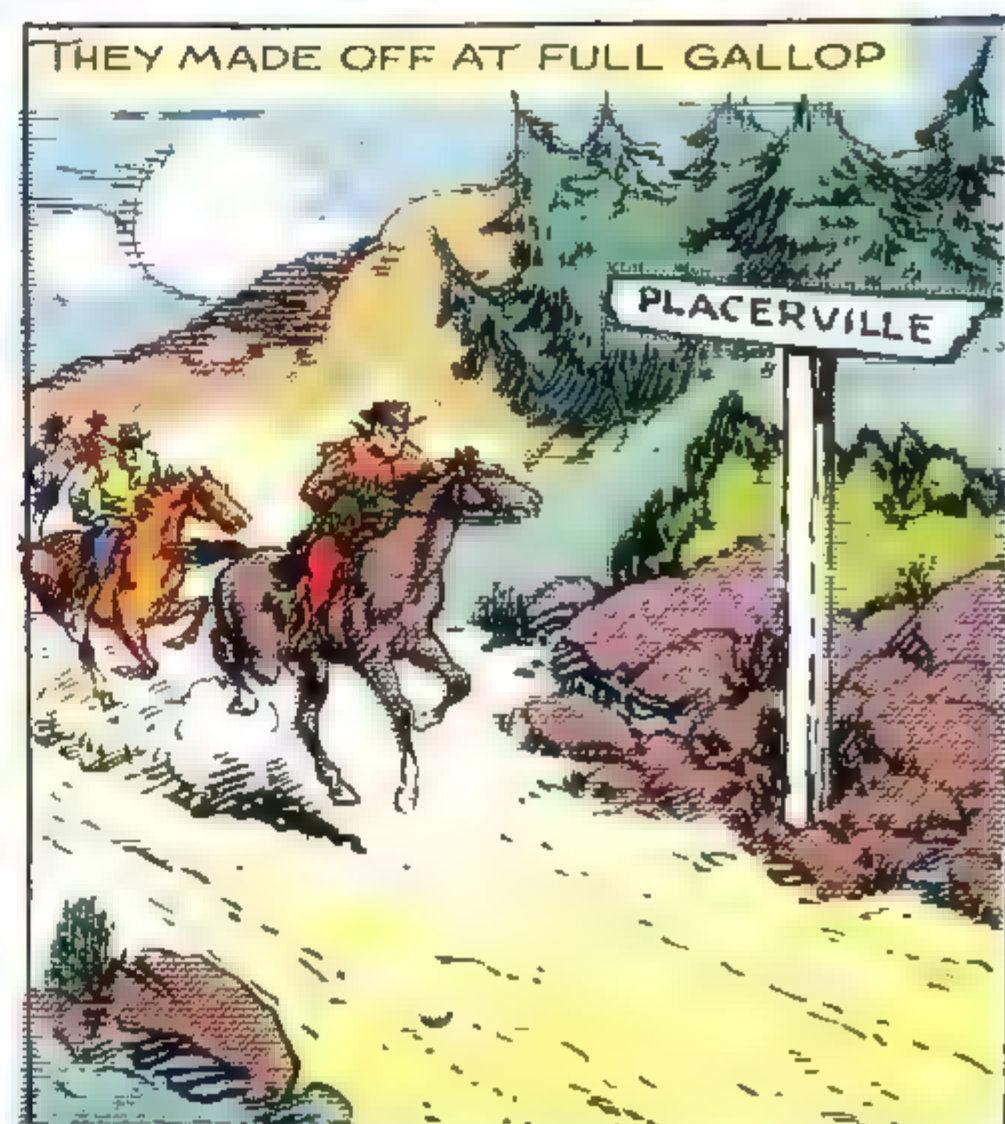


WHAT'S MORE, THE ROCK FALL'S BLOCKED A SPRING THAT RUNS THROUGH THE WORKIN'S, AND THE WATER'S RISIN' FAST INSIDE! UNLESS SOMETHING'S DONE MIGHTY QUICK, MY PARD'S A GONER!



AS THE REST OF HIS MEN RETURNED, HAVING PUT THE APACHE TO FLIGHT, COLT CODY MADE A LIGHTNING DECISION

IF THAT ROCK PILE'S AS BIG AS YOU MAKE OUT, OLD TIMER, WE'LL NEED DYNAMITE TO SHIFT IT. AND THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE WE CAN GET ENOUGH OF THAT—BACK IN TOWN! LET'S GO!



THEY MADE OFF AT FULL GALLOP

AND WHEN THEY REACHED THE TOWN—

FETCH A WAGON
FROM OUR HEADQUARTERS. I'LL
RIDE TO THE LOCAL MINING
STORES FOR A SUPPLY OF
EXPLOSIVES

WORKING AT TOP SPEED, THE RANGERS SOON HAD
A WAGON LOADED WITH DYNAMITE AND KEGS OF
GUNPOWDER

RIGHT!
SHE'S ALL SET TO
ROLL. I'LL SLIP OUT OF
TOWN THE BACK WAY
AND HEAD FOR THE
HILL TRAIL

WE
OTHERS'LL
TAKE THE MAIN
TRAIL AND DRAW
OFF ANY APACHE
WHO MAY BE
LYING IN
WAIT

AND SO THE RANGERS—NOW WITHOUT
THEIR LEADER—THUNDERED OUT OF
PLACERVILLE

BUT SCARCELY HAD THEY REACHED THE OPEN TRAIL THAN
THEY WERE ATTACKED FROM ALL SIDES

IT'S BLACK KNIFE
AND HIS BRAVES! WE'LL
BREAK THROUGH AND LURE
THEM OUT ACROSS
THE PLAIN!

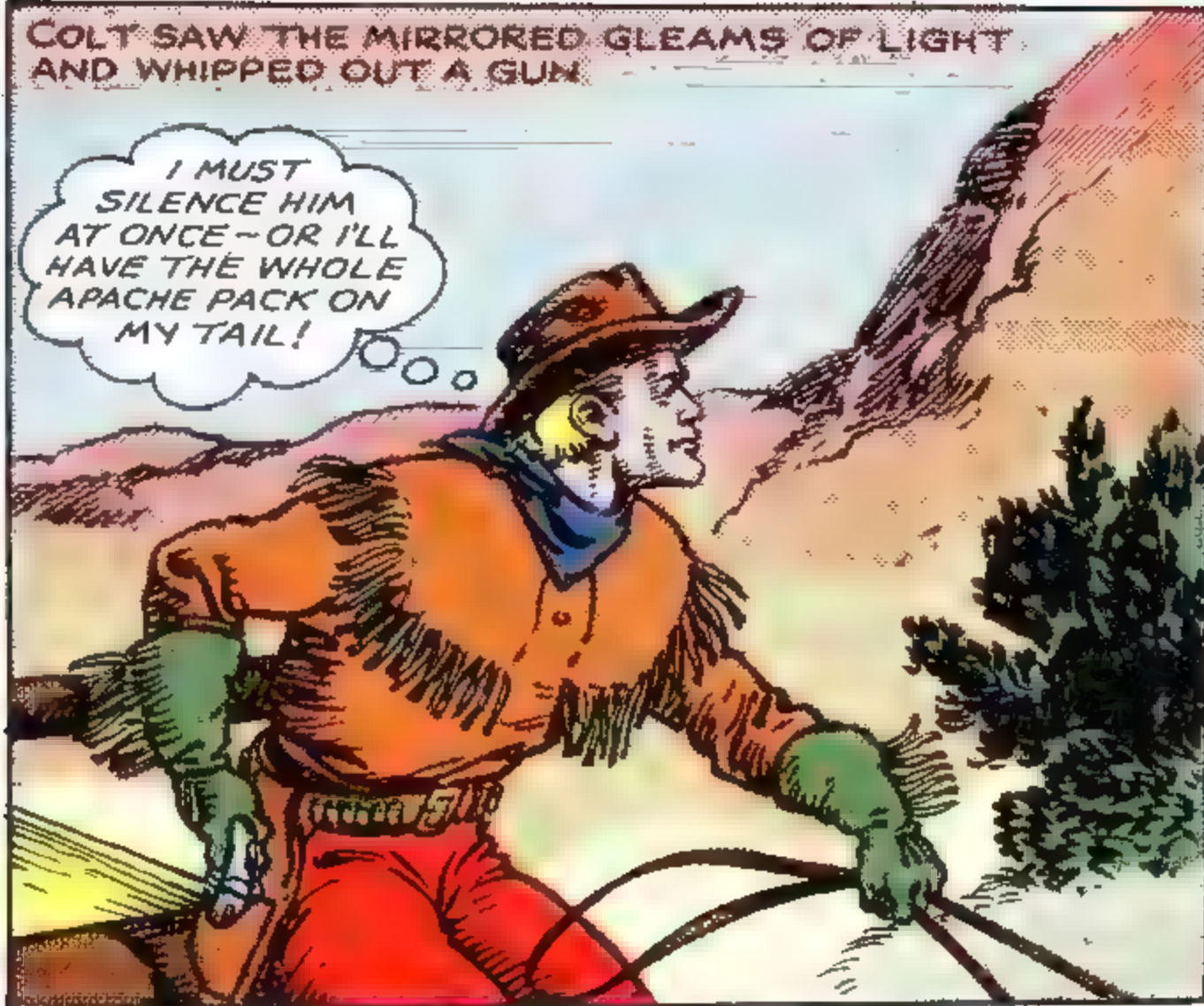
MEANWHILE, COLT CODY WAS RACING ALONG THE HILL
TRAIL. SUDDENLY THE HARSH RATTLE OF GUNFIRE
LIFTED TO HIS LISTENING EARS

GUNSHOTS!
BY THE SOUND OF IT
THE BOYS HAVE RUN INTO
THE INJUNS ALREADY. THAT
MEANS I MIGHT GET THROUGH
TO THE MINE WITHOUT
BEING SEEN.
GOOD!

BUT AN APACHE SCOUT HAD SPOTTED
HIM FROM ABOVE AND WAS FLASHING
A SIGNAL WITH A PIECE OF POLISHED
METAL!

COLT SAW THE MIRRORED GLEAMS OF LIGHT
AND WHIPPED OUT A GUN.

I MUST
SILENCE HIM
AT ONCE - OR I'LL
HAVE THE WHOLE
APACHE PACK ON
MY TAIL!



BUT BEFORE THE RANGER COULD FIRE -

TOO LATE -
HE'S DODGED INTO
COVER! WAAL, I GUESS
I'LL PRESS ON, AND
TRUST TO LUCK HIS
MESSAGE WASN'T
SEEN



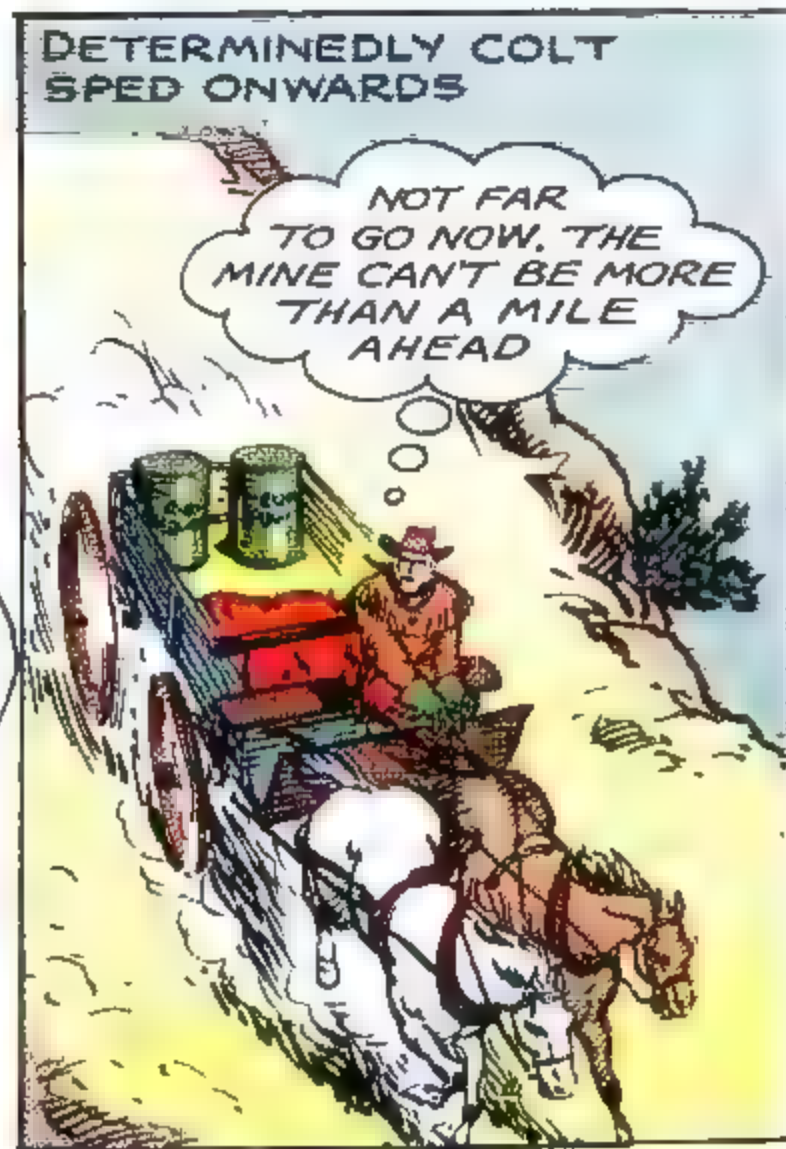
THE WARNING SIGNAL HAD GOT
THROUGH, HOWEVER, AND BLACK
KNIFE AND HIS BRAVES, HAVING
ABANDONED THEIR CHASE OF
THE RANGERS, WERE NOW
STORMING IN PURSUIT
OF COLT CODY



SO THE
PALEFACE CHIEF
SEEKS TO TRICK
US. BUT HE SHALL
NOT ESCAPE. TO
THE HILLS, MY
BROTHERS!

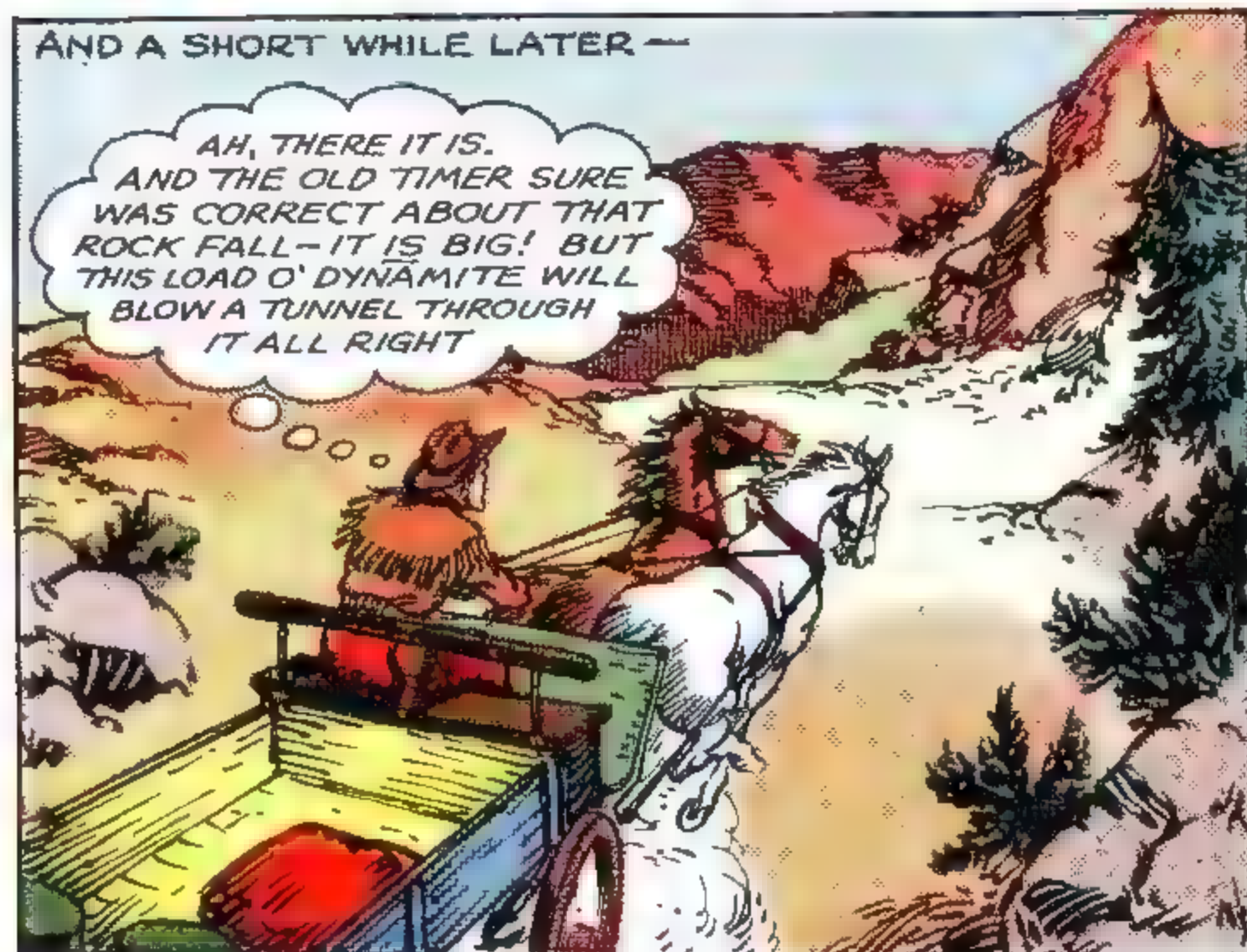
DETERMINEDLY COLT
SPED ONWARDS

NOT FAR
TO GO NOW. THE
MINE CAN'T BE MORE
THAN A MILE
AHEAD



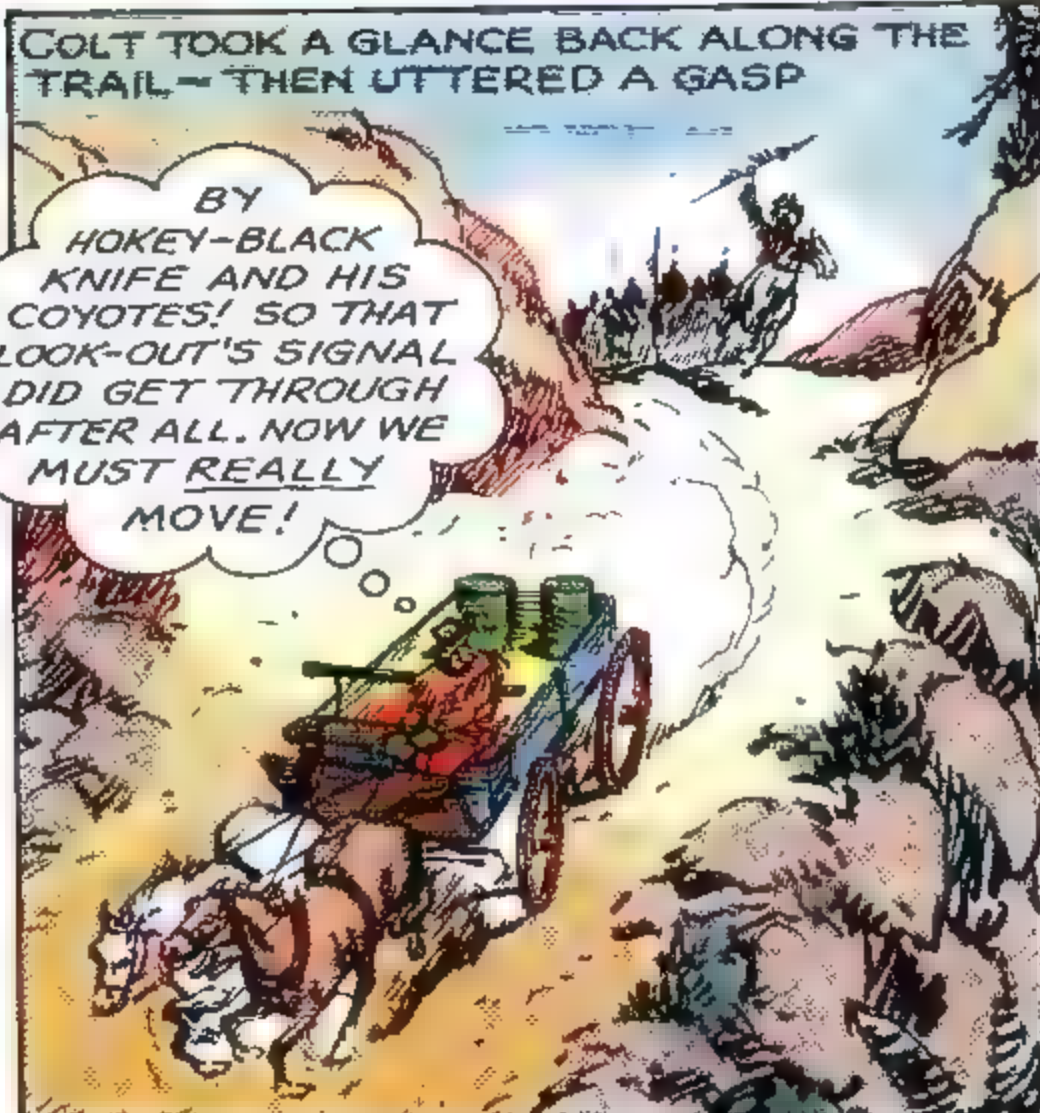
AND A SHORT WHILE LATER -

AH, THERE IT IS.
AND THE OLD TIMER SURE
WAS CORRECT ABOUT THAT
ROCK FALL - IT IS BIG! BUT
THIS LOAD O' DYNAMITE WILL
BLOW A TUNNEL THROUGH
IT ALL RIGHT



COLT TOOK A GLANCE BACK ALONG THE
TRAIL - THEN UTTERED A GASP

BY
HOKEY-BLACK
KNIFE AND HIS
COYOTES! SO THAT
LOOK-OUT'S SIGNAL
DID GET THROUGH
AFTER ALL. NOW WE
MUST REALLY
MOVE!



SOON THE WAGON WAS HURTLING ALONG AT BREAKNECK SPEED



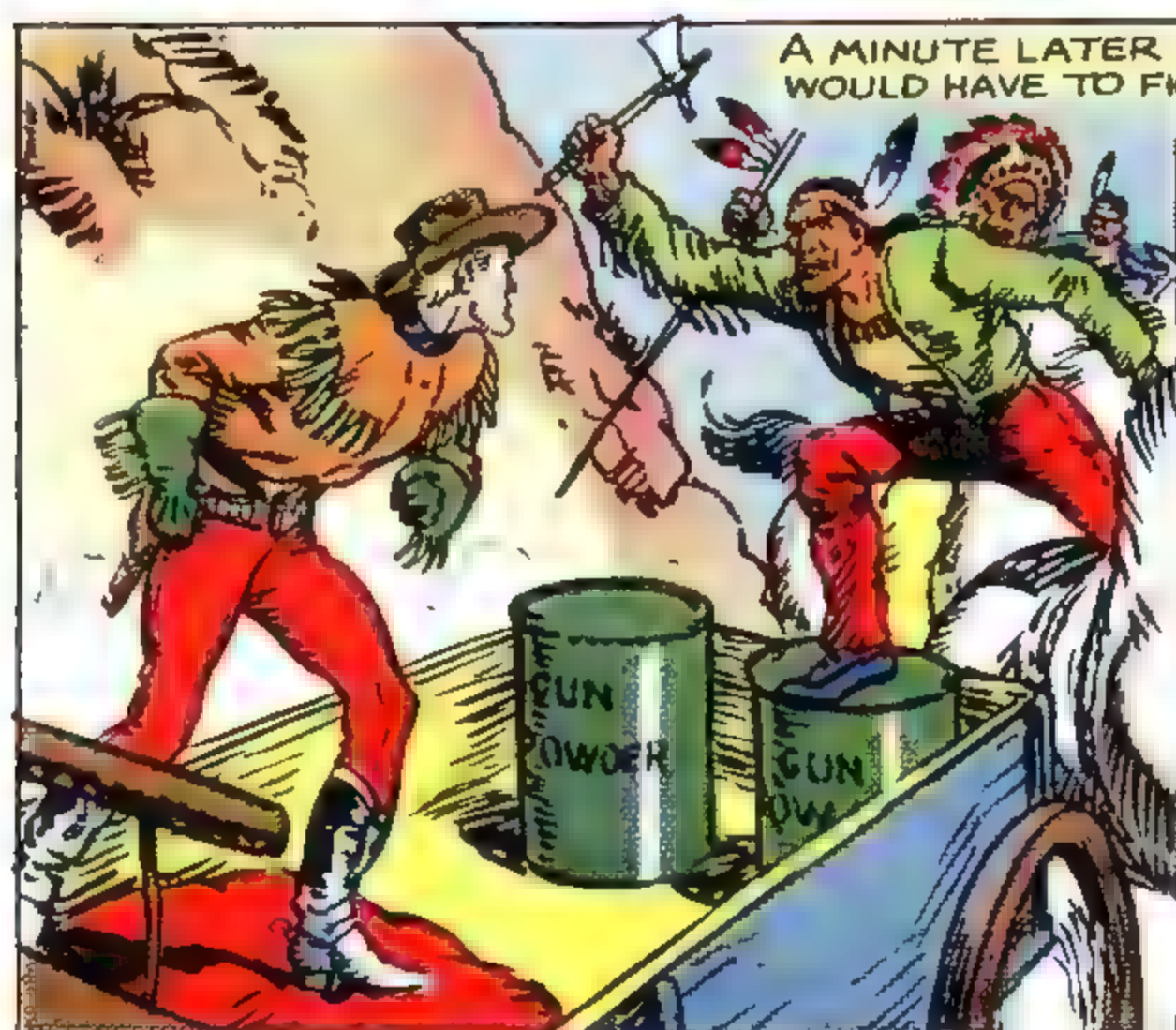
AFTER A FEW MOMENTS, HOWEVER-



YARD BY YARD THE INDIANS CLOSED WITH THE LURCHING WAGON



A MINUTE LATER COLT CODY KNEW HE WOULD HAVE TO FIGHT FOR HIS LIFE



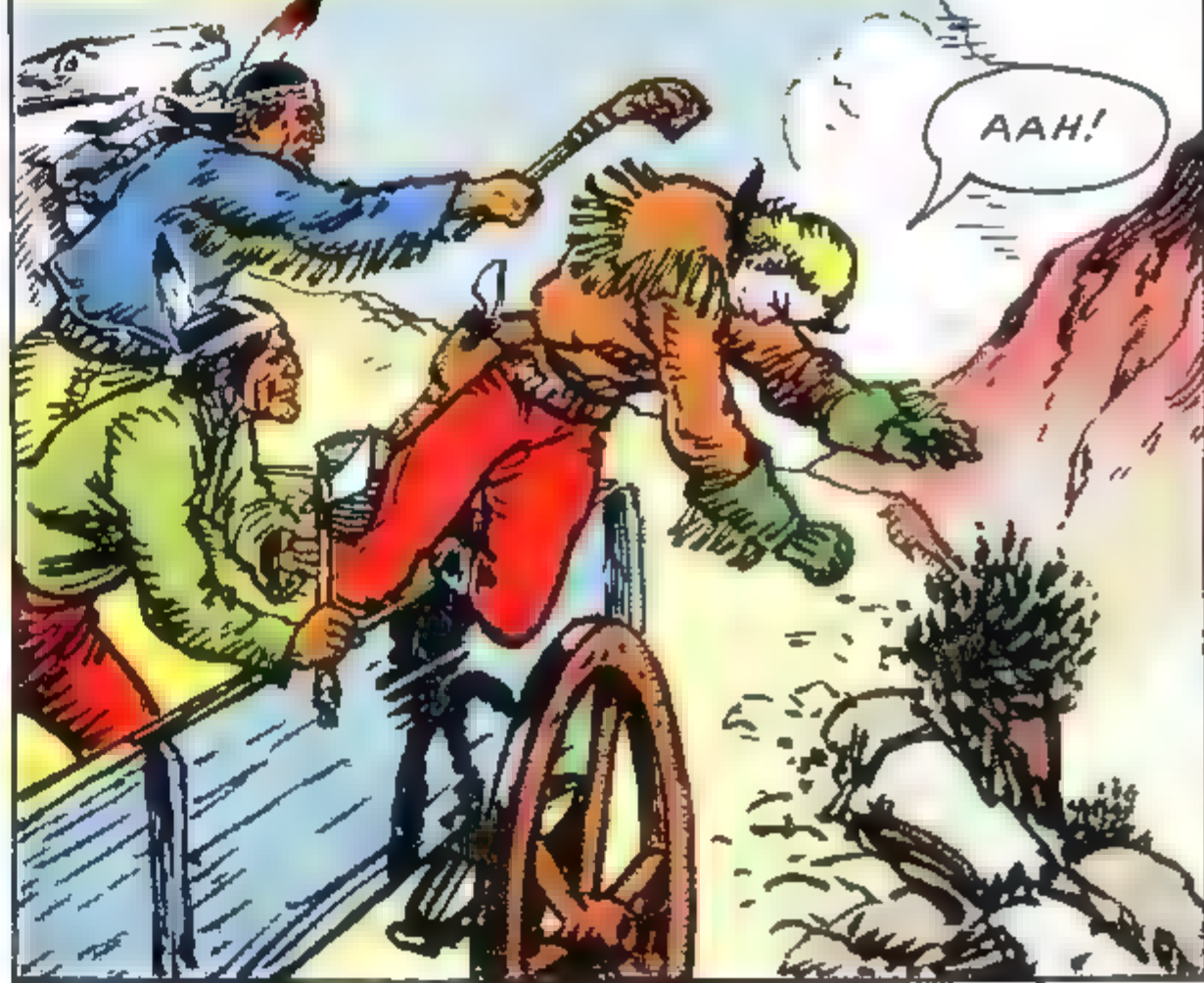
THAT'S ONE!



AS THE WAGON WAS HAULED TO A STANDSTILL, THE WHOOPING APACHE SWARMED ABOARD—ONLY TO BE MET BY COLT'S FLYING FISTS



BUT THE INTREPID RANGER WAS HOPELESSLY OUTNUMBERED, AND AT LAST—



HE CRASHED ON TO THE TRAIL AND ROLLED DOWN THE SLOPE



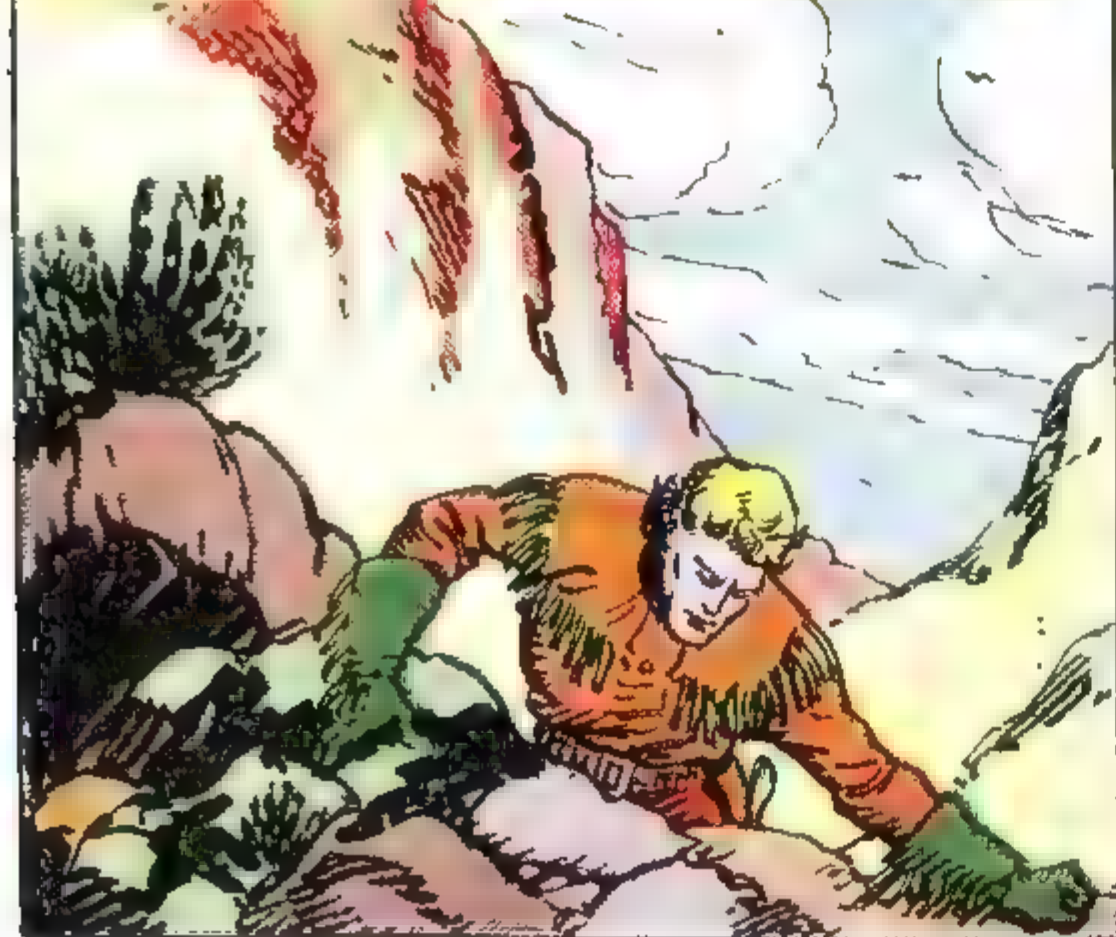
WITH WHOOPS OF TRIUMPH THE APACHE GAZED AT THEIR SPRAWLED VICTIM



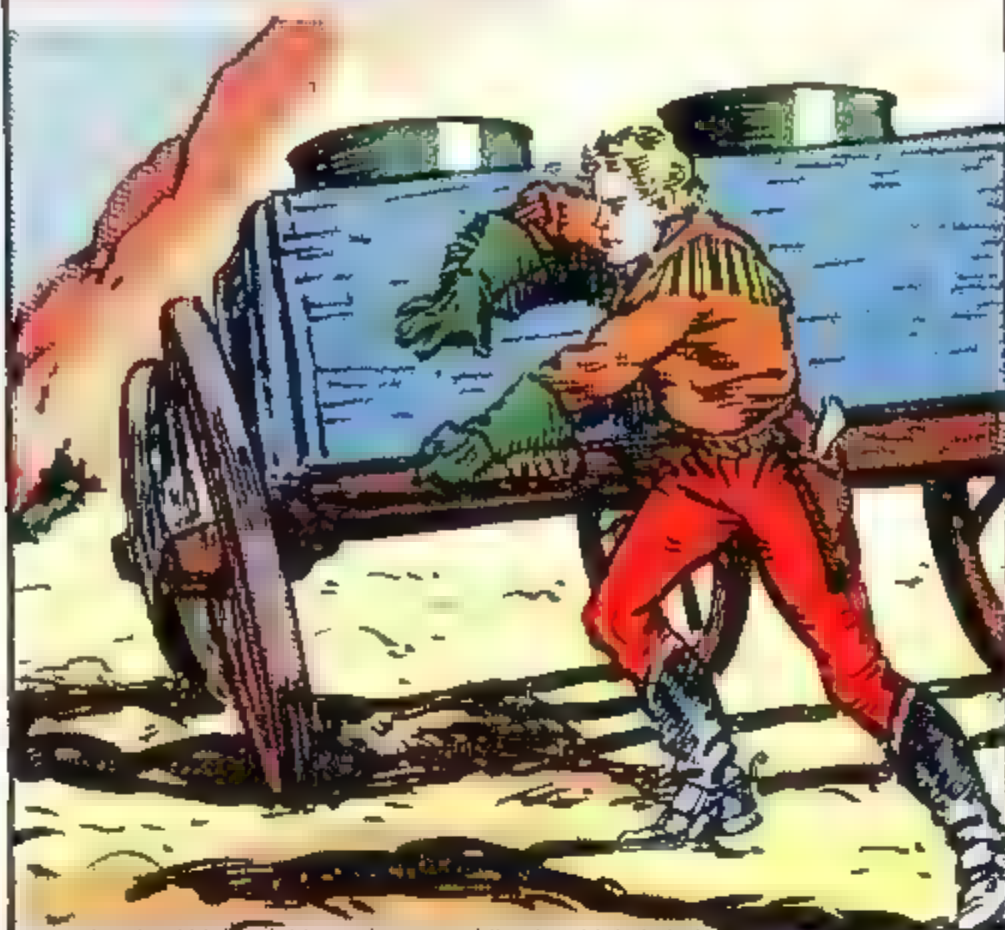
AND SO, TAKING THE WAGON HORSES, THE APACHE DEPARTED



BUT THE FEARLESS RANGER WAS NOT DEAD. HE STIRRED AS MEMORY CAME FLOODING BACK TO HIS PAIN-RACKED FRAME



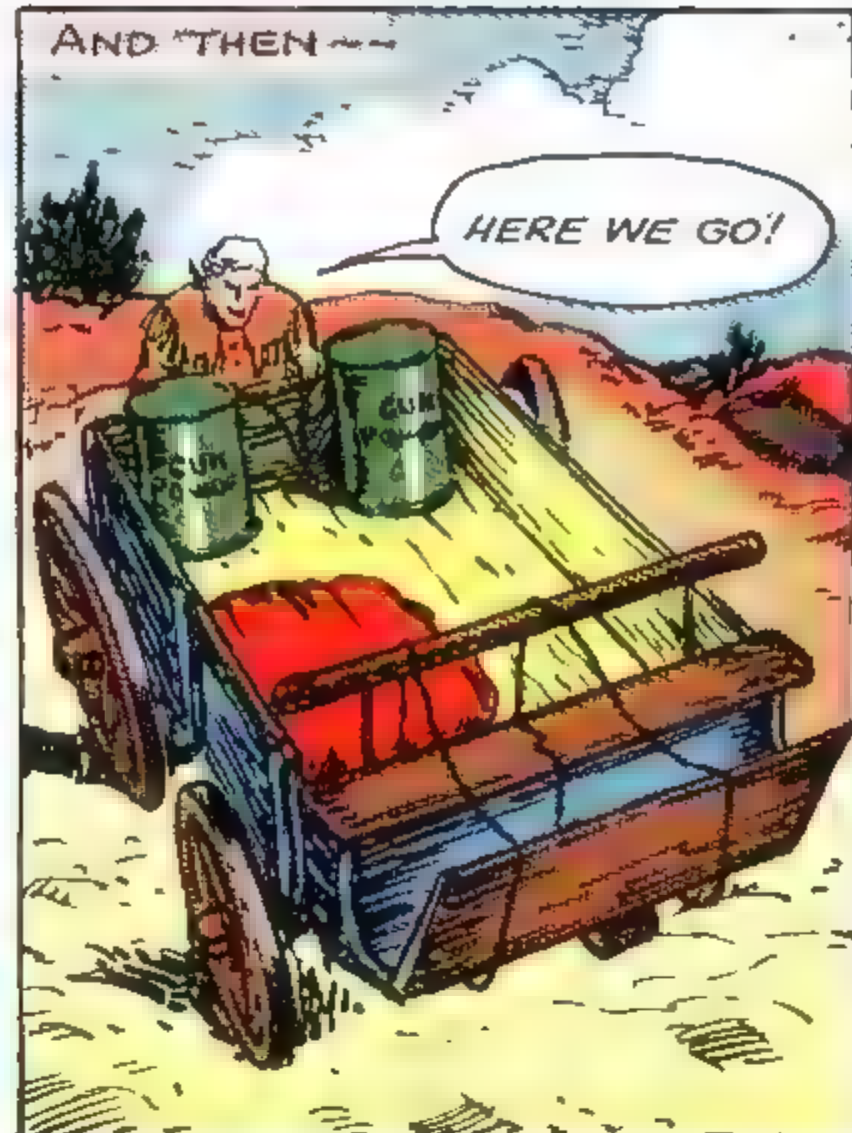
AFTER AN EXHAUSTING CLIMB, COLT GAINED THE TOP OF THE SLOPE. THEN HE USED ALL HIS STRENGTH IN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO MOVE THE HEAVY VEHICLE



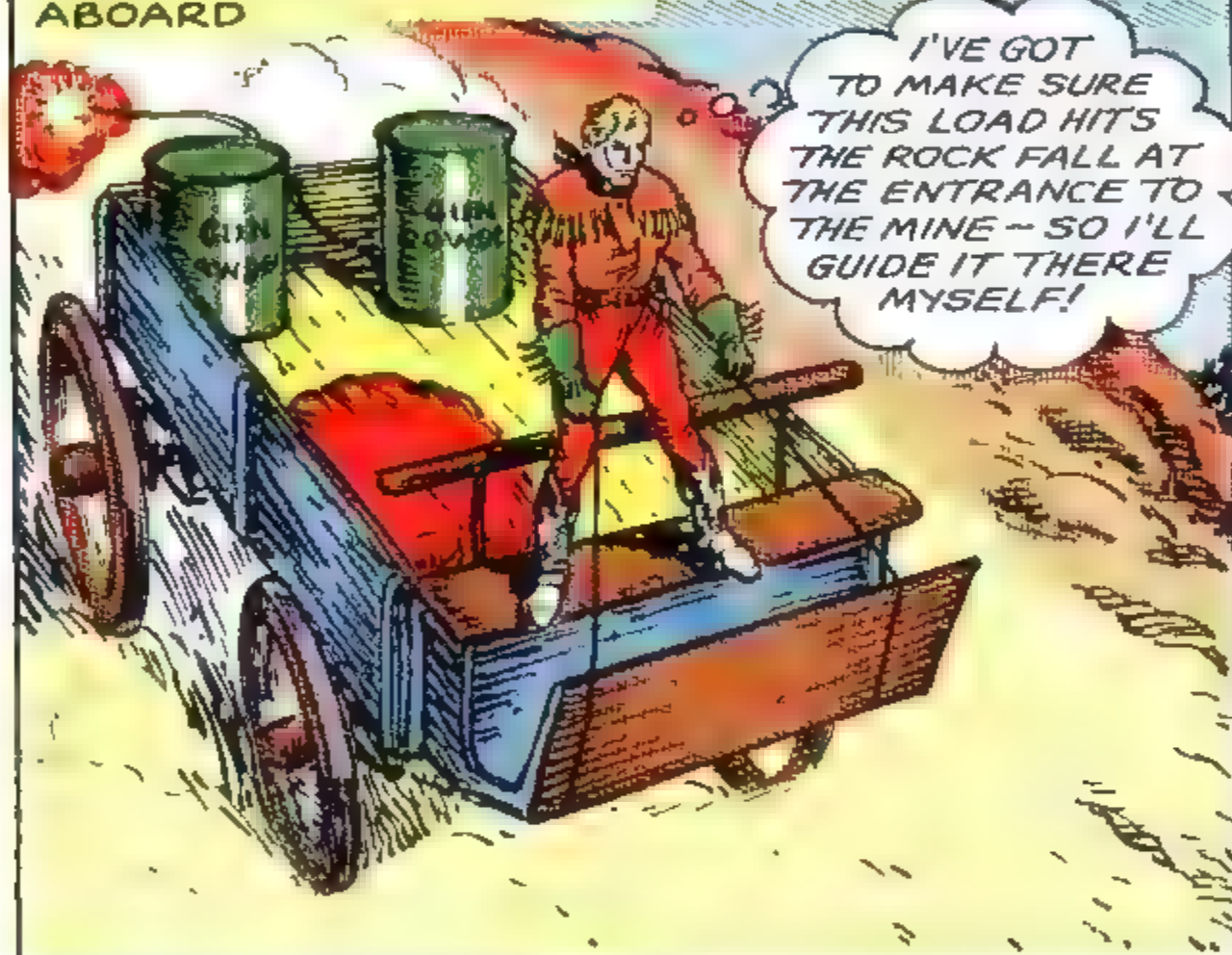
HE HALTED AT THE EDGE AND LIT THE FUSES OF THE EXPLOSIVES



AND THEN --



AS THE DYNAMITE WAGON BEGAN ITS DOWNWARD PLUNGE, THE DARING RANGER LEAPT LITHELY ABOARD



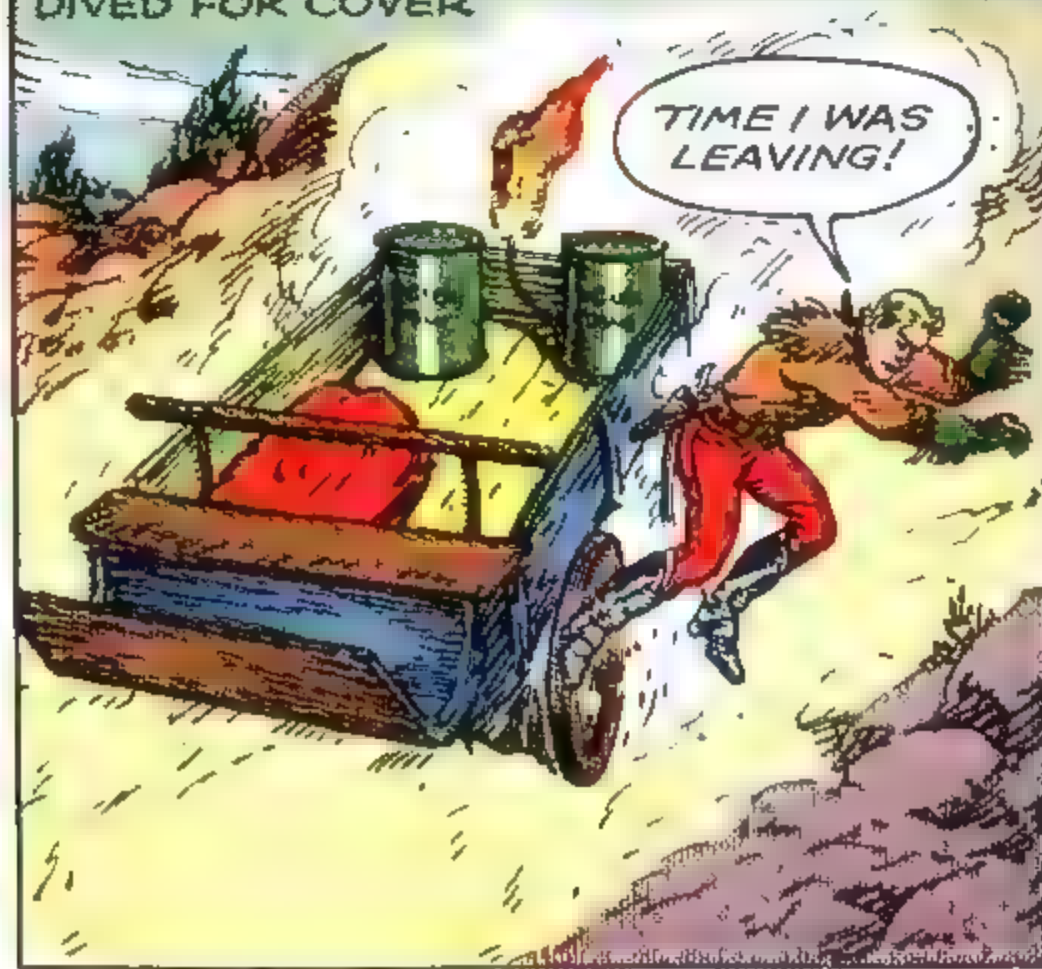
THE RUMBLE OF THE CAREERING WAGON CARRIED TO THE KEEN EARS OF THE APACHE FARTHER DOWN THE VALLEY



WITH A SAVAGE CRY, BLACK KNIFE BARKED AN ORDER. AT ONCE HIS WARRIORS STARTED BACK ALONG THE VALLEY



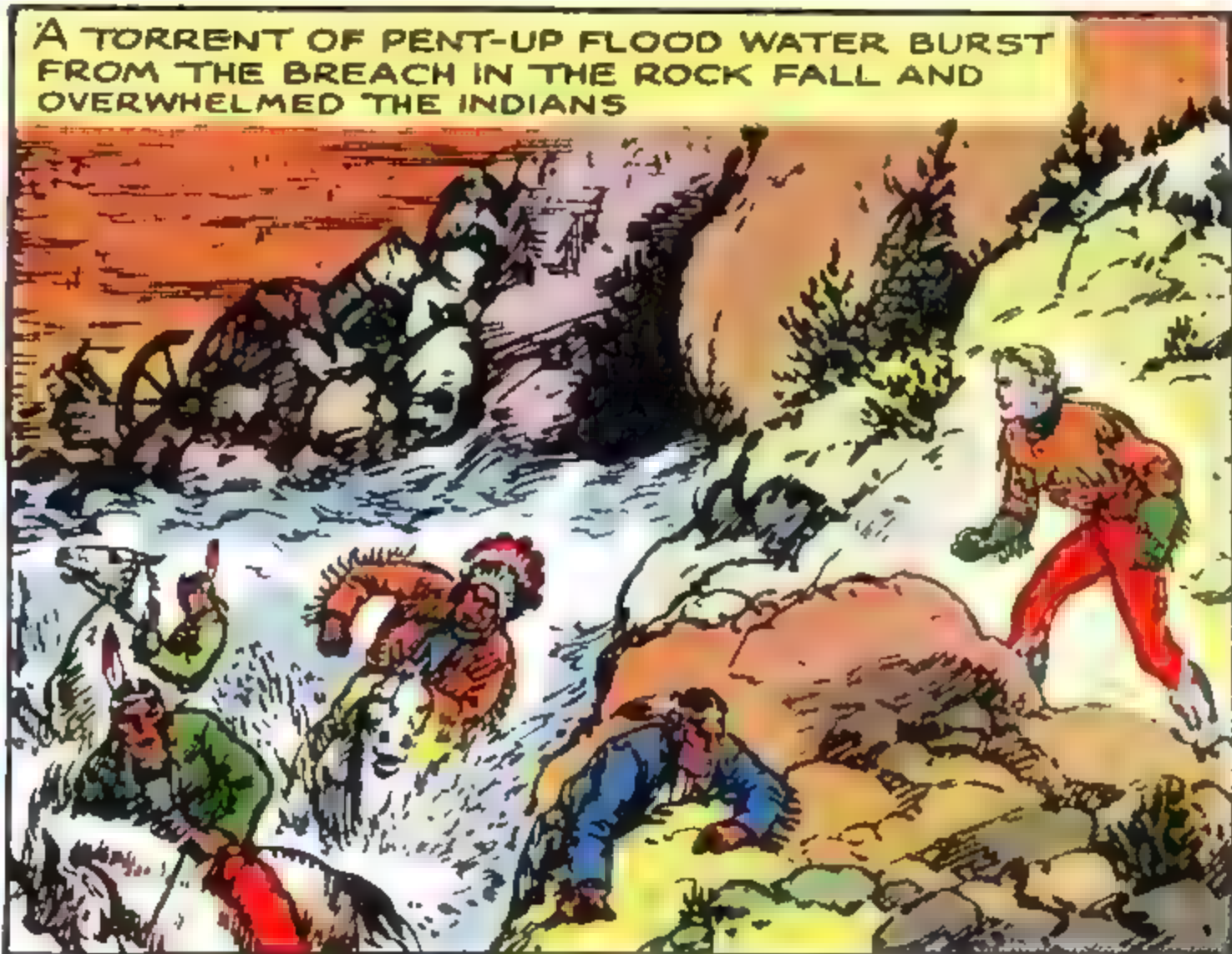
MEANWHILE THE HURLING WAGON WAS RAPIDLY NEARING THE PILE OF ROCKS. WITH A BREATH-TAKING LEAP, COLT DIVED FOR COVER



SPLIT SECONDS LATER —



A TORRENT OF PENT-UP FLOOD WATER BURST FROM THE BREACH IN THE ROCK FALL AND OVERWHELMED THE INDIANS



AND AS THE WATER GUSHED AWAY, COLT RACED FOR THE GAPING HOLE IN THE RUBBLE. THEN, SUDDENLY, HE SAW A SODDEN, GRIME-STAINED FIGURE STAGGER FROM THE DARK TUNNEL



IT'S THE TRAPPED MINER — AND ALIVE STILL! PRAISE BE I WAS IN TIME!

BRIEFLY THE EXHAUSTED OLD GOLD DIGGER EXPLAINED



I WAS IN A HIGHER TUNNEL — BUT THE WATER HAD REACHED MY NECK! IF YOU HADN'T ARRIVED WHEN YOU DID, I'D BE A DEAD MAN!

AT THAT INSTANT A RANGER CAME THUNDERING UP — AND WITH HIM THE OLD MINER'S PARTNER



NEITHER BLACK KNIFE OR HIS MEN WILL MAKE TROUBLE IN THIS TERRITORY AGAIN. THE WHOLE BUNCH RAN CLEAN INTO OUR ARMS, SCARED BY THE EXPLOSION, THEY GAVE IN WITHOUT A FIGHT!

AND SO, WITH THE OLD MINERS' THANKS RINGING IN THEIR EARS, THE RANGERS TOOK THEIR LEAVE



A MAN'S LIFE HAD BEEN SAVED AND A PACK OF LAWLESS REDMEN BROUGHT TO JUSTICE — ALL THANKS TO COLT CODY, RIDER OF THE RANGE!

THE
END.

OPERATION MYSTERY ISLAND

STARRING
MAX MALONE

BY
TREVOR
HUGH



CRASH DIVE!

I RECKON this is the first time one submarine has carried another. The Japs are sure booked for a big surprise."

The speaker was Max Malone, ace British secret agent in the Far East during World War II. Beside him on the heaving deck of a British submarine was his pal, Hutch Hall. Together they watched as another dark shape slid from a specially constructed housing on the big submarine's deck.

The dark shape was a second submarine—a two-man affair—which had been brought within striking distance of an island off the Korean coast. It was all part of Max's daring plan to strike another blow at the Jap armies.

It was a tough and desperately dangerous mission. From a secret agent in Korea, Allied Headquarters, Far East, had learnt a mysterious piece of news.

The Japs had abruptly dismissed all the Korean workers at a large factory on the island and had expelled all the natives from the nearby village. They had ringed the area with barbed wire. Then new machinery and technicians had been rushed in from Japan.

It was the pals' job to find out what the Japs were up to, in that mysterious factory!

Now as they climbed down into the midget sub, Max darted a sudden glance into the dark sky.

"'Planes," he rapped, then jerked round to the captain of the larger vessel on his conning tower. "Ahoy, captain. Aircraft approaching. It may be the Japs!"

"By thunder, you're right. I can hear 'em," the

captain yelled back. "'Bye for now—we'll have to scarper."

Then with a wave he gave the order to dive.

Instantly Max clamped down his own hatch. Hutch leapt to the controls, tensely waiting Max's orders. Through the steel hull they heard the sudden flurry of the bigger vessel's motors leaping to life.

"Blow tanks. Crash dive," Max snapped.

Hutch switched on the motors, threw over the ballast controls and set the side vanes for a steep-angle, fast dive. Max, with his eyes on his charts, set course for the distant coast.

Meanwhile, the thud of the big sub's powerful motors throbbed rapidly away.

"Near thing," Max gruffly stated. "Those were Jap bombers, by the sound of their engines. If they'd spotted either of the two subs we'd have a pretty uncomfortable time."

Boom!

Through the water came the vibrating boom of a distant explosion, and Hutch threw Max a startled look.

In a flash Max snapped an order. The midget sub cautiously climbed surfaceward. At the con-

A Daring Mission into the Heart of Enemy Territory During World War II

trols, Hutch levelled off, a few feet below the night-darkened surface.

At once Max shot the tiny periscope up from its casing. Swiftly he gazed into the magnifying reflector. Hutch saw his jaw tighten, and he eyed Max with sudden anxiety.

"Hutch," Max gritted. "The Jap bombers have dropped flares. It's almost bright as day up top. And, by heck, they're unloading bombs. Blazes—they're running a target drop. They must have located the other submarine."

Boom—boo-oom—boom!

The midget sub echoed with the shock of the distant explosions. One after another in rapid succession the Jap bombs hurtled down from the dark sky. Through his periscope Max glimpsed the flash of their bursts.

"The Japs are using plenty of bombs," he gritted. "If the sub hasn't crash-dived deep enough, those powerful blasts are going to fracture its steel casing for sure!"

The flares were lighting the sea with a great white glare. Suddenly, a mile or more away, Max saw the stern of the submarine silhouetted. It was high in the air, its bows far down in the water!

Even as he watched, the stern slid beneath the sea, and a rain of Jap bombs pounded down in its wake. The grim drama had come to a sudden end!

"The sub was hit before it could crash dive," Max grimly reported. "The Japs have damaged it, but I can't say how badly. Our lads may be alive, but trapped on the bottom of the sea!"

His gaze darted to the charts before him. The coast of the island was not too far distant, and inland lay the mysterious factory in its ring of barbed wire. To discover what was going on there was the pals' real mission. But the loss of a British submarine crew was a terrible price to pay in trying to solve the mystery.

Suddenly he gave a start. His gaze had fallen on his charts. They showed the depth of the water, and a sudden wild hope flashed through him. In a split second he had snapped on the headphones of the underwater hydrophones!

He signalled to Hutch to quieten the motors. Then, ears strained he listened. Hutch watched him intently, wondering what Max was so desperately listening for.

"On motors," Max abruptly rapped, a gleam in his eyes. "Keep 'em at half-speed. We're tracking a course."

Wonderingly, Hutch obeyed. Meanwhile Max, his ears strained to pick up every sound through the hydrophone, had his hand on the tiller control. Slowly the midget sub surged through the water. Then Max signalled Hutch to put the sub into a dive.

"Gosh," Hutch gasped suddenly, "I can hear sub engines."

"You bet you can," Max's face was alive with sudden hope. "I managed to pick 'em up, and we've tracked the mother sub by its motors. They're still working, Hutch. That means the lads are alive aboard the sub. And if they're in need of help it's up to us to give it!"

The throb of the larger sub's motors was now loud and clear through the steel casing of the midget sub. They were steadily nearing it, far below the surface of the sea. Max eyed the depth gauges. Six fathoms!

Hutch frowned as the midget sub shuddered slightly. But he saw Max grinning with triumph.

"We've located the sub," Max exclaimed excitedly. "We've just bumped it, on the sea bed. Switch off motors, Hutch."

In the sudden quiet inside the midget sub they could hear the steady throb of the other sub's motors. And, also, they distinctly heard the knock of tools. The crew were frantically at work, inside their vessel, trying to repair damage.

Max snatched up a large spanner. Stepping to the steel side of the midget, he smote powerfully on its casing. Hutch gave a start as he listened. Max was sending a code message.

"Em Em to sub," he tapped "can you hear me? Em Em waiting your reply."

There was a long pause. Then, dully, there came a sudden series of fast but loud thuds.

Through the water dividing the two vessels lying on the bed of the sea deep came an answer to Max's message.

"Sub to Em Em—We hear you. We are taking water. Sub damaged. Cannot surface. Escape hatch jammed. Unable to open. We are trapped. Water rising."

Max and Hutch eyed each other in horror.

The lads in the mother submarine were trapped inside their wrecked vessel. In a short while the submarine would be filled with seawater. All aboard it would be drowned like rats in a trap!

MAX MALONE—PATHFINDER!

BUT almost before the message had ended Max was leaping to the midget sub's switches. The motors hummed, and the sub began to race to the surface. As it broke water, Max shed his tunic. At lightning speed he began to slip into frogman's outfit.

Switching off the motors, he threw open the conning hatch. Then he slipped a small grenade into his pouch and climbed out on to the steel deck!

"Hutch," he gritted. "Keep your ears and eyes open for enemy aircraft or sea patrols. I'm going overboard, to try to help the Navy boys."

For one moment he paused as he was about to

dive. He glanced into the darkness, towards the island. Max's jaw hardened. Somehow he was going to rescue those lads, trapped far below, and then carry out the mission he and Hutch had started out on—to solve the mystery of the Korean factory.

Cleanly he dived overboard. Kicking powerfully, Max surged down and down through the almost pitch dark water. His eyes peered desperately for his objective, the trapped sub. And suddenly he glimpsed it, a long black shape below him.

The tapped message had said the escape hatch was jammed. And as he surged across the sub his fingers felt over the hatch. He gave a grunt of understanding.

A steel stanchion had buckled and twisted in the blast from the Jap bombs. Now it was bent down over the escape hatch, holding it fast, preventing it being thrust up from inside.

In a fraction Max knew he could not unbend that tough and deadly stanchion with muscle power alone. He had had a hunch that something like this might have happened and that was why he had brought the grenade.

Pulling it from the pouch, Max wedged the lethal metal case between the hatch top and the bent stanchion. At last he was satisfied. The grenade was firmly fixed.

Then he pulled out the pin—and swam frenziedly away. He had to put as much distance as possible between himself and the explosion; for, if the shock wave caught him, he would be knocked cold!

Max streaked through the water. Even though the grenade was specially made for sabotage work and had a long fuse, he had all too few seconds to reach safety!

Then he felt it! There was a gigantic thud in the water behind him, the sea bed was lit by a searing flash, and a sudden breathtaking impact hit his back. He was hurled forward willy-nilly through the dark depths.

But he was all right! He had been sufficiently far away not to be knocked out, and as he turned he saw that his ruse had been successful.

Although the grenade had not been powerful enough to damage the inches thick armour plating of the hatch, it had blown the stanchion clear of the top. Now the submarine crew could get out.

Reaching the hull of the big sub he tapped a message.

"Em Em to sub," he rapped. "Escape hatch now free. Get out! Am waiting on surface to pick you up!"

There came a moment of suspense! Had they heard?

Then back came a lightning answer. They had heard and understood.

Max waited for no more. Kicking desperately he shot to the top, and ripped off his mask. Greedily he drank in the cool night air, then swam to the midget sub where Hutch was waiting.

"Hutch," he gasped. "Toss out life lines. The lads from the sub will be surfacing! Ah . . . here they come!"

A head was bobbing above the waves. Then another, and another—until all around the midget sub the rescued crew of the trapped submarine were floating in their escape lifebelts.

Max clambered aboard the sub. From there he called out a low-toned instruction to the men swimming nearby.

"Listen, chaps. Hang on to the life lines. We're going to tow you to the cave where I planned to park our midget sub while we went snooping inland."

"Okay, Malone." It was the sub captain's voice in the dark. "You've saved us all. Now we'll do as you say."

Max knew the risk he was taking was full of peril. A Jap patrol boat might appear out of the night, its probing searchlight skimming the sea. If this happened, Max knew in his heart of hearts he would have to submerge and leave the sub men to take their chance.

But dauntlessly he switched on the midget sub's surface engine. Its quiet throb sounded startlingly loud in the night.

"Hutch," he gritted. "Get below and close down the hatch, to deaden the motors. I'm staying on deck, to keep a look-out. Keep course as I've marked it on the chart."

With the hatch closed the midget sub stole on almost soundlessly. Behind it, the submen and their captain clung to the life lines, putting their faith and trust in the redoubtable Max Malone. Steadily they neared the island.

Max swung up his night binoculars. The coast leapt into view as he focused the glasses. Eagerly he scanned the cliff. He was seeking a low-roofed cave and a path up the cliff. It was there he intended to hide the midget until the mission was over.

He uttered a sudden hiss of anxiety. There was the cave alright. But the cliff-path which Intelligence had told him of was no longer there. It had fallen away, far down into the sea below. He would be able to park the sub inside the cave—but there was no way of climbing the cliff to the top.

He glanced back at the life-lines. The men grimly clinging to them were weary, near to the end of their strength. In a flash he reached a decision. He must carry on to the cave!

Motors at half-speed, and almost silent, they stole steadily nearer and nearer to the cliffs. The massive shadows of these threw an even greater darkness over the water. For this Max was thank-

ful. Skilfully, tapping morse orders down to Hutch inside the sub, he at length took the tiny vessel under the low roof of the cave.

They had made it!

A ledge ran round the inside of the cave. Gasping with relief, the rescued sailors swam to it and hauled themselves on. Max tapped to Hutch to switch off the motors and then to open up the hatch. He eyed the shadowy figures lying panting on the ledge.

"Listen, chaps," he called in a low whisper. "You're safe enough here so far as the Japs are concerned. But there's no food, of course. So as soon as you've rested, it'll be necessary to swim along the foot of the cliffs to a beach. Near the beach are woods where you can gather berries and nuts."

It didn't take long for the men to recover from their exhaustion. Signalling them to follow him, Max plunged into the water. Hutch swam at his side. The others ploughed on close behind.

At last the end of the cliffs came in sight, and a sandy beach took its place. As they approached, a big turtle scuttled ashore.

Ba-ang!

A flash lit the sky. A thunderous roar split the night, and a volcano of sand hurtled skyward.

"Down," Max hissed. "Keep low. Don't let your heads show above the water. That was a land-mine. The turtle exploded it as it scuttled up the beach."

The sailors crouched in the shallows as the echo of the exploding mine floated into the night. The beach was mined. How were they to cross the deadly stretch of mined sand?

Even before the explosion had died away Max was darting a feverish glance around him. Nearby a tongue of low rock stuck up out of the water. In a whisper he ordered them all to hide themselves behind it.

Hardly had they reached the cover of the rock, safe from probing Jap eyes on shore, when the excited voices of Japs reached them through the dark. A torch beamed out, from the rear of the beach, sweeping the sand. It suddenly halted.

In its rays Max saw the turtle, half-buried in the blown-up sand. The track it had made, from the sea to where it had touched off the concealed land-mine, was faintly illuminated by the torch beam.

As Max saw the track a startling plan jerked into his head.

"Stay here, and don't utter a peep," he gritted.

Before Hutch could ask what he meant, Max was swimming out to sea. Then, opening his mouth, he sent a shrill yell.

"Help!" he screamed in Japanese. "Help!"

Treading water, he peered intently towards the shore, and the torch light. He saw it swerve in his direction. He threw up an arm, waving it frantically.

Again he yelled for help. Then, tensely, he became silent, watching the torch light.

Max felt a sudden thrill of excitement. As he had desperately hoped, the torch was weaving a path across the mined beach, towards the water's edge. The Japs knew where they had hidden the land-mines under the sand. Now the Jap with the torch and some of his comrades were picking a path down to the sea edge.

Max continued his cries for help. All the time his eye was intently fixed on the torch. As at last it halted, he knew the Japs had come to a stop at the edge of the sea.

"Don't want the blighters plunging in to rescue me," he thought. "So this is where the shark gets me!"

His cries changed to a sudden scream of terror.

"Shark!" he screeched at the top of his voice, in Japanese.

The Japs on the shore heard a sudden thrashing in the water, then all was grim silence. Max, low in the water, saw them staring fearfully out to sea. Then, with shrugs, they turned away and made their way carefully back up the mined beach.

Max swam under water back to the rock.

"Okay, chaps," he whispered. "We'll give those Japs a few minutes to clear off. Then we'll swim to the beach."

Wonderingly, Hutch and the others lay doggo, waiting Max's next order. At last he signalled them to follow him. With silent strokes they swam to the shore, in the wake of Max.

Stealing from the water on all fours, Max pointed to the tracks made by the turtle in the soft sand. Following it, careful not to leave the trail, they wormed their way after Max. They saw him switch trail, and found they were crawling over the footprints made by the Japs as they had moved to the water's edge.

"Made it," Max hissed, as at last they reached the rear of the beach. "Those Japs very kindly laid a nice clear track for us through their darn mine-field. My stunt fooled 'em into showing us how to cross it in safety," and he chuckled grimly.

But a sudden sound took the smile from his face.

Max, Hutch, and the submarine sailors were crouching in the shadows of a screen of bamboo saplings. Behind them lay the mined beach. On the other side of the bamboos was a stretch of open country; and the moon was just rising.

Everything was becoming clear and visible in the moonlight. The moment they left the cover of the bamboo grove, they ran the risk of being detected by any Japs prowling in the area.

But worse still there was the approaching clatter of a Jap tank. It rolled into view, and it was heading straight for the bamboo grove in which the chums and the sub sailors crouched.

If they stayed where they were, they would be run down by the tank. If they fled, the Jap tank crew would see them—and at once a stream of machine-gun fire would mow them down!

SECRET OF THE SILENT STRONGHOLD

“STAY where you are, chaps.”

It was Max who ripped out the startling command. Next second he was sliding away. Hutch gasped. Max was making for the beach and the deadly field of hidden mines.

Reaching the sandy beach Max threw himself flat. Inch by inch, working at desperate speed, his ears filled with the menacing clatter of the slowly approaching tank, he dived his hands into the sand.

Steadily, on his stomach, he worked his way forward. With a sudden clenching of his teeth, his heart pounding at the terrible risk he knew he was taking, he felt a hard object. Gently, he eased it up out of the loose sand. It was a Jap land mine.

Working back along the track he had made Max at last reached the safety of firm ground. He got to his feet, the Jap mine held steadily in his fists. He raced back to the bamboos. The Jap tank was rumbling onwards, towards the bamboos.

He rose to his toes, took careful aim then heaved. As he did so he breathed a snap order to the others.

“Throw yourselves flat,” he hissed.

The dish-shaped land-mine spun through the air. Max saw it curve down. The throw was perfect.

The mine fell smack beneath one of the tracks of the Jap tank.

A shattering bang roared into the night. Max saw the tank lurch violently, rise at an angle then crash down with an earth-shaking thud. The tank came to an abrupt halt.

Hardly had the tank crashed back onto its tractor before Max, doubled low, was hurling himself across the dividing space. In one powerful leap he was on top of the tank. With a jerk he threw back its hatch. Inside, all was silence.

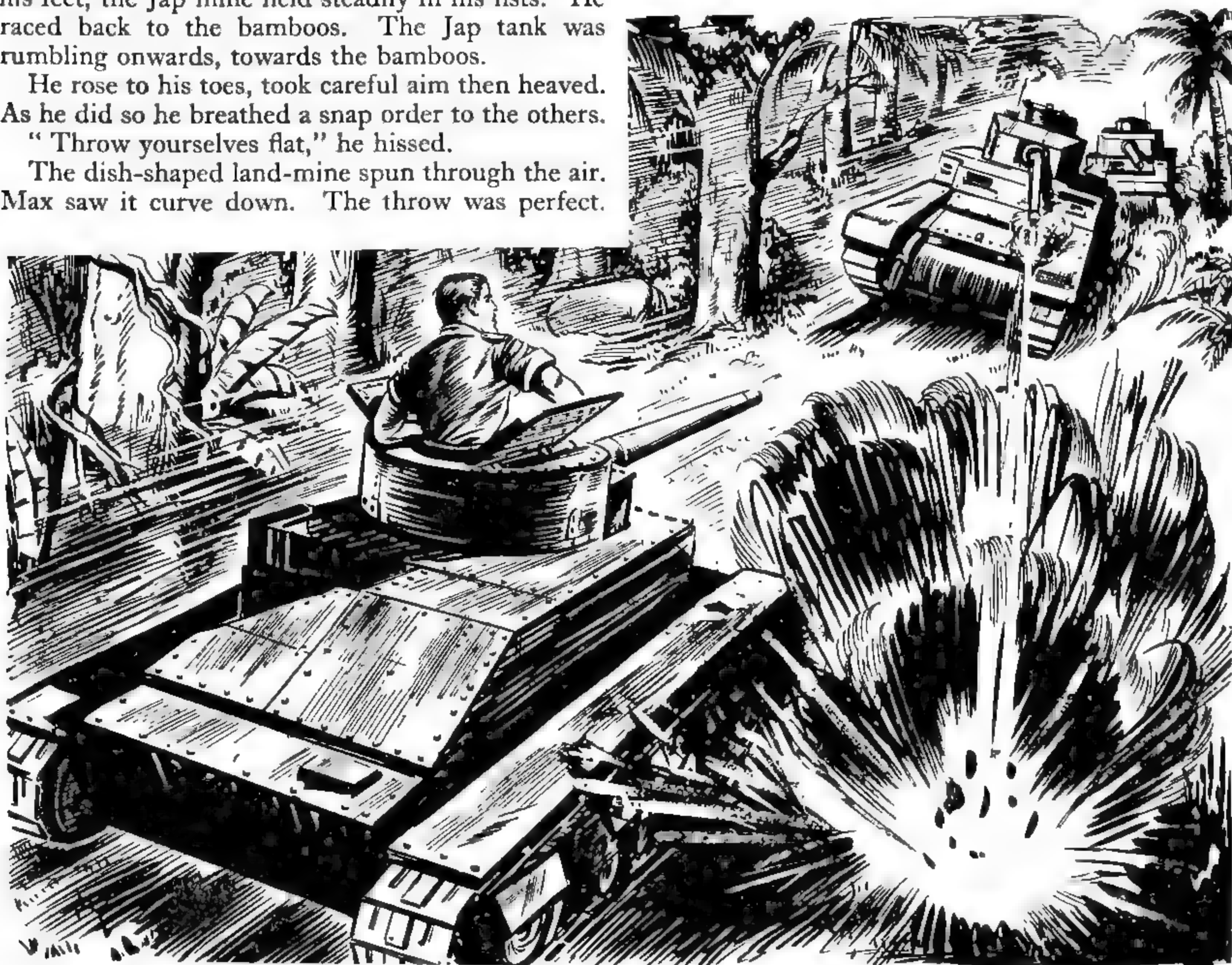
Hutch sped after Max and leapt up beside him.

“Gosh,” he gasped. “That explosion will bring the Japs tearing back again, Max.”

“I think not,” Max retorted. “They’ll believe it’s another turtle touched off a land-mine on the beach. Keep your gun ready. I’m going down into the tank!”

Inside, he found the Jap tank crew lying stunned by the sudden explosion and tremendous lurch. All three of them were knocked out.

In double-quick time Max was shouldering them



Boom! Crash! The Japs opened fire, and a shell exploded alongside the tank captured by Max and Hutch. Was it the end for the two secret agents?

up to Hutch. Climbing back out of the tank, Max signalled the sub captain over.

"Take these three Japs, and guard 'em, will you?" he urgently whispered and then leapt down to examine the tank track. "'Um—that mine has damaged the track. Can your sub mechanics repair it, captain? If they can, I've got a use for this tank!"

"You bet they can," the captain nodded eagerly.

The three Japs were carried into the bamboo grove. There some of the sub crew set a guard over them, while the mechanics clambered into the tank. From its tool kit they rapidly found what they needed.

With almost no noise they set to work, and expertly repaired the damaged track of the tank. As they finished, Max eyed it with grim satisfaction. Then he turned to Hutch.

"We're going to use this Jap tank to carry out our mission, Hutch. It's our best bet, to ride through Jap-occupied countryside. That way we'll reach our objective, the mystery factory."

No words were wasted. The captain and his crew slid into the nearby wood to gather fruit and nuts and to await the return of the dauntless chums from their perilous mission deep into the island. From their concealment, they saw the tank rumble away into the night.

Max had a clear picture of the site of the mystery factory. And without hesitation he set course towards it.

Hutch, steering the tank, peered through the narrow observation slit. He saw they had reached a road, and now the tank was roaring along it at top speed in the dark. Max heard Hutch mutter a growl of alarm.

"Japs ahead," Hutch hissed.

Max leapt to the slit. A column of Jap infantry was striding along the road. As they heard the clatter of the tank coming from their rear, they half-turned, looking back at it.

"Keep going at full speed," Max gritted.

The tank thundered on. It came level with the marching Japs. Tensely, through their observation slit, the chums eyed them, ready for instant action.

Then they both breathed again. The Japs lifted their hands. They gave the tank a wave as it dashed by. Then the tank was roaring on, the chums grinning at each other in triumph.

"They think there's a Jap crew inside the tank," Hutch chortled.

On through the night the tank pounded. It breasted a rise. As it did so, Max gripped Hutch's arm, and pointed.

"That's it, down there, in that ring of trees," he rapped. "The mystery factory, and it's surrounded by a fence of barbed wire."

In the moonlight they could see the factory. It

was in darkness. But Max knew that at sunrise the Jap technicians, who had been specially flown in from Japan to man its mystery machinery, would pour into the factory to commence work.

The road wound down through the overhanging trees. The interwoven mass of branches over the road threw it into almost total darkness as the tank rumbled under them. Then the trees ended. Before them lay the barbed wire fence.

The factory, unlighted and quiet, reared ahead of them. The road bent round the factory, to its entrance. But Max brought the tank to a halt at the rear of the building. He eyed it keenly.

"Jap guards will be at the front, at the entrance through the ring of barbed wire," he told Hutch. "It's a three-storey factory. What in tarnation are the Japs making in there, I wonder?"

The tank engine was ticking over quietly. Max put it into low gear. Making the least noise possible he turned it off the road, towards the barbed wire fence.

The tracks ground their way over the grass. The fence loomed in the moonlight. With a metallic crunch the tank rode into the wire, flattening the fence under its weight. Tensely the chums jerked their heads round. Would the Japs on the other side of the factory hear the wire being crushed?

Nothing happened, and Max guessed the Japs were too used to hearing the growl of tanks in the night to bother. Never for one instant would the Japs think British agents could be riding one of their own machines.

Max steered the tank alongside the rear wall. Climbing on to its top, he reached up until his fingers closed over a window ledge. Next moment he was drawing himself on to the ledge. The watching Hutch saw him slip through the window.

Max was gone several minutes, and Hutch waited with increasing anxiety. Suddenly he saw his chum reappear. Lightly he dropped down on to the tank. Something clenched in his right hand.

Abruptly he opened his hand. He held it out.

Glinting in the moonlight were several round steel balls.

Hutch stared at them wonderingly. Then he gasped.

"Thunder, Max. So that's it. Ball bearings!"

The mystery was at last explained. The Japs had brought from Japan the intricate machinery for making ball bearings. Ball bearings, without which no 'plane engine, no tank engine, or any other weapon of destruction could work. Ball bearings were a basic necessity for every branch of mechanised war.

"By thunder," Hutch gritted, "if we could destroy this factory and all the valuable machinery in it, we'd give the Japs one of the worst knocks they've had in this war!"

"You're dead right, old son," Max nodded. His eyes gleamed with excitement. "And that's just what we're going to do."

He leapt back into the tank. One by one he passed up to Hutch the shells stored in racks inside the tank. They swiftly built them into a pyramid at the foot of the three-storey rear wall of the factory. Max kept back just one shell.

"Okay. Into the tank," he rapped.

They reversed the tank, then trundled it back on to the road. Max swung the tank gun. He focused it on the pyramid of shells, and holding his breath, he fired.

The shell flashed from the gun. Next second there was a shattering roar. The pile of shells went up like a volcano.

Next instant, the wall of the factory burst apart, the roof caved. The factory began to crumble to the ground, burying the machinery under its ruins.

The daring pals waited to see no more. The valuable ball-bearing machinery was destroyed. It was a major disaster for the Japs and it would be many long months before they would recover from the pals' courageous sabotage.

The thunderous explosion and the crash of the wrecked factory was heard far and wide. Max was grimly sure it would bring Japs racing to the scene from all directions.

With a roar the tank engine burst into life as Max threw in the gear. Reversing the massive machine, he spun it on its left track, then hurtled back up the hilly road. Ahead, the trees met over the road as they sped from the smoking ruins.

"Tanks, Max!" Hutch's yell was filled with sudden grim warning. "A Jap squadron is beetling down the road towards us, under the trees."

At full pelt Jap tanks were thundering towards them, racing two abreast, blocking the road under the trees. Their bulky outlines loomed menacingly in the dark as they pounded towards the wrecked ball bearing factory.

Boom! Crash! The leading tank opened fire, and the shell exploded alongside the pals' captured vehicle.

There was no time to turn the tank in an attempt to escape. Max came to a lightning decision.

"Out on the roof, Hutch," he yelled. "And when I give the word, Jump!"

Hutch acted at jet speed. On the lurching roof of the tank he crouched, waiting Max's orders. Below, Max grimly eyed the oncoming tanks through the narrow eye slot. He rammed the powerful engine into top gear. As he did so, he jammed the control handle, setting it to run dead ahead.

Next instant Max was leaping to the roof beside Hutch.

"Now," he gritted. "Leap for the branches overhead."

In the almost pitch black shadows of the tree-covered road the chums rose to their feet. Side by side they hurled themselves upward. Their hands clasped the branches above them.

Moving at top speed they swung into the thickness of the tree. As they did so, Max paused for a split second. He watched the scene below.

The tank, thundering onward at full power smashed head-on into the leading tank. The two massive vehicles reared almost upright, then crashed in the path of the tank racing alongside the Jap leader.

Behind, the view of the other tank drivers was blotted out by the tanks in front. A series of thunderous crashes echoed through the trees, as one after another, they each rammed into the rear of the tank in front.

"Wow," Hutch gasped as he saw the terrific damage. "You've knocked out all the Jap tanks, Max. What a smash-up."

And without any further waste of time, the agile pals swung away from the grim scene, through the branches of the trees. Behind them the noise of the two disasters faded, as they sped back towards the coast.

The submarine crew greeted them eagerly. Excitedly they listened to Max's brief account of their exploits.

"And now, chaps," he finished, "let's get cracking."

"But how can we get away?" the sub captain asked in puzzlement. "We haven't a boat, and your midget sub can't carry more than you two chaps."

Max grinned. He led the way to a nearby cliff and pointed to the beach. A line of native canoes lay abandoned. The owners had been driven from their village by the Japs. They had no use for their craft.

"You blokes are going to ride in those canoes," he whispered. "We're going to tow you behind our midget sub. And when we get over the horizon, Hutch will send a radio message, in code, asking the R.A.F. to send a flying boat to pick you up."

And just before sunrise, the following morning, a British flying boat zoomed down to the surface of the sea, many miles from the coast of Korea. Aboard their midget sub the heroic pals of the secret service watched the sub crew climb into the aircraft.

Max and Hutch had triumphed yet again!

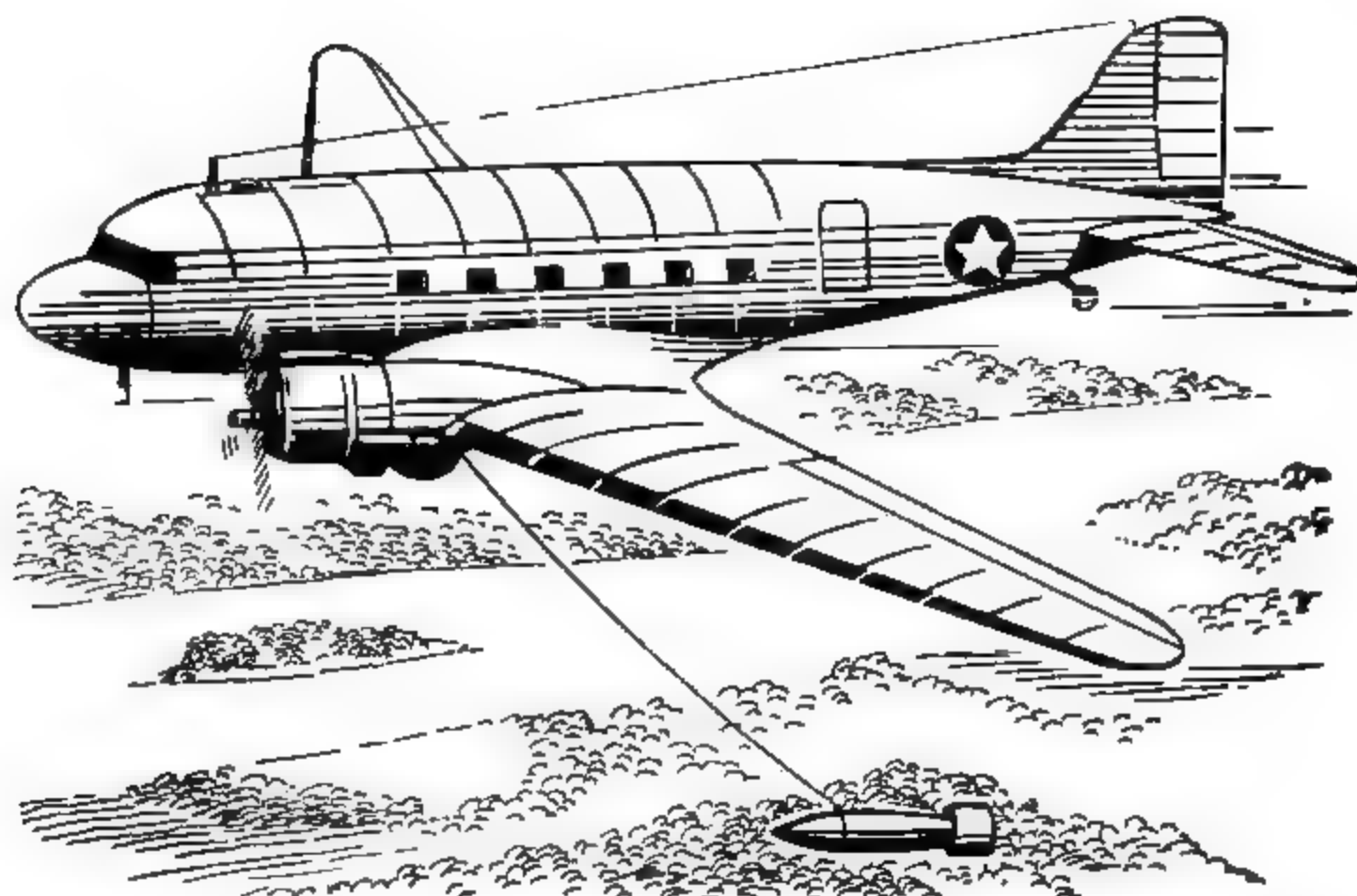
THE END

SKYWAY

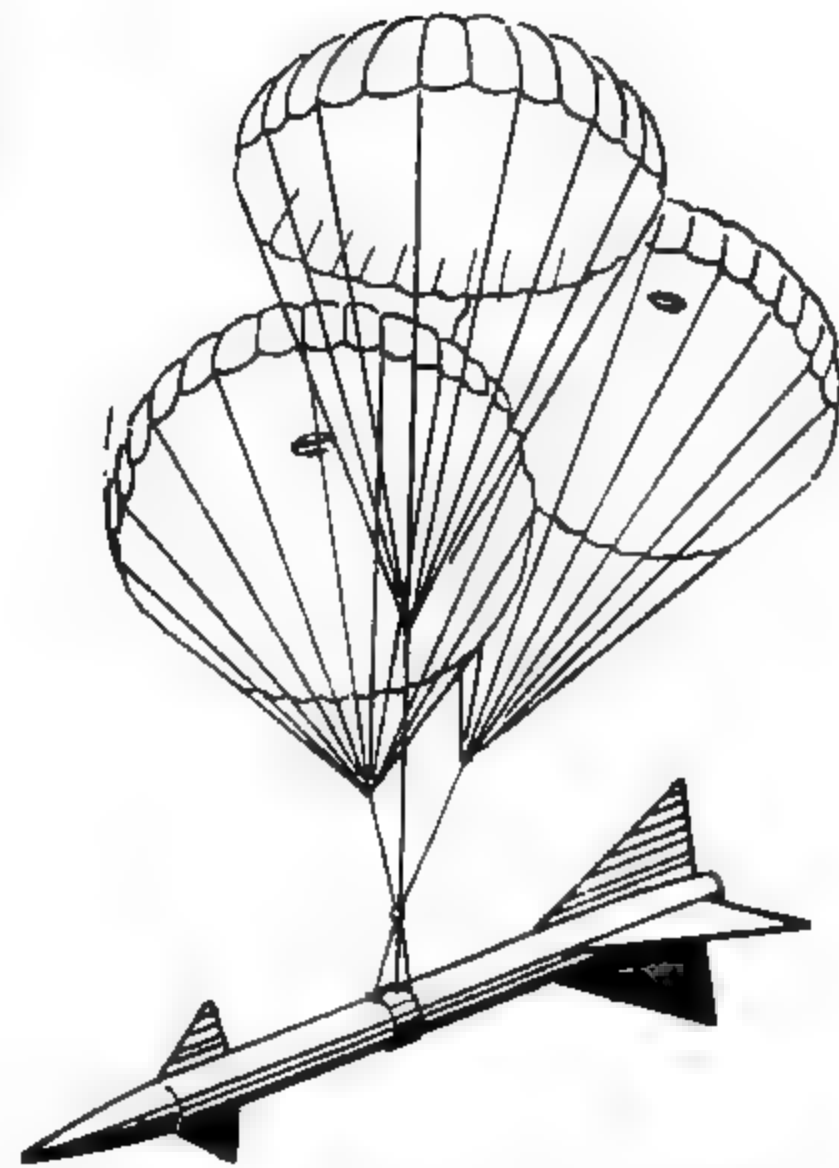
(Left).—Planes don't grow on trees—not even plane trees! The aircraft shown here ran out of petrol over a dense forest in the U.S.A. and had to come down on the tree-tops. Thanks to its light weight, the slender branches supported the machine until firemen were able to free the passengers.



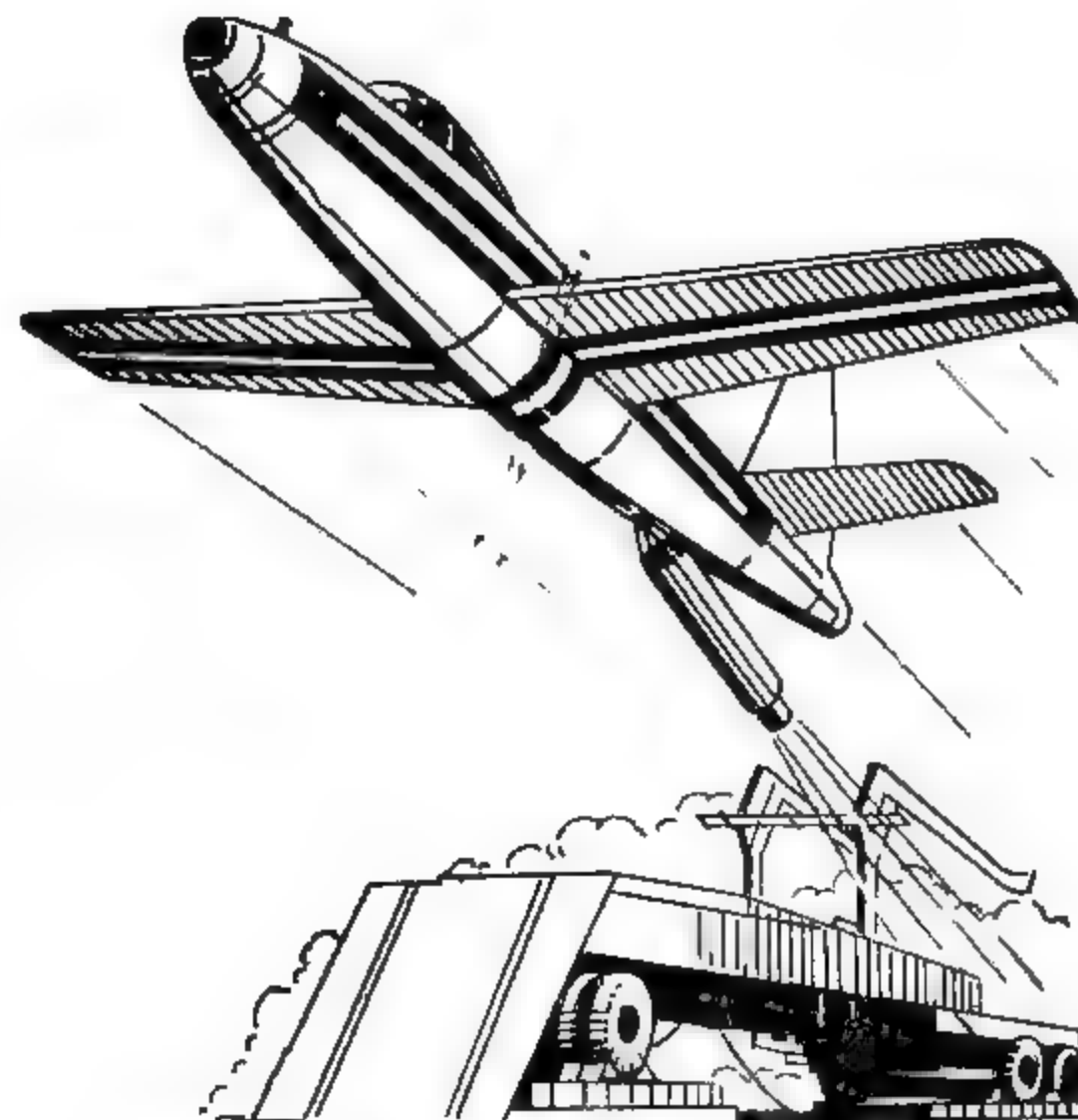
Where there are whales there are whirlybirds in Antarctic waters these days. Whaling ships use helicopters to seek out the ocean monsters. On sighting one, the pilot drops a smoke signal which brings the harpooners at full speed to the kill.



No, it's not a bomb being towed on a cable—but a device used for aerial prospecting. When the invention passes over areas rich in mineral ore, it gives off electro-magnetic signals and records the position of the deposit. After that the digging starts!

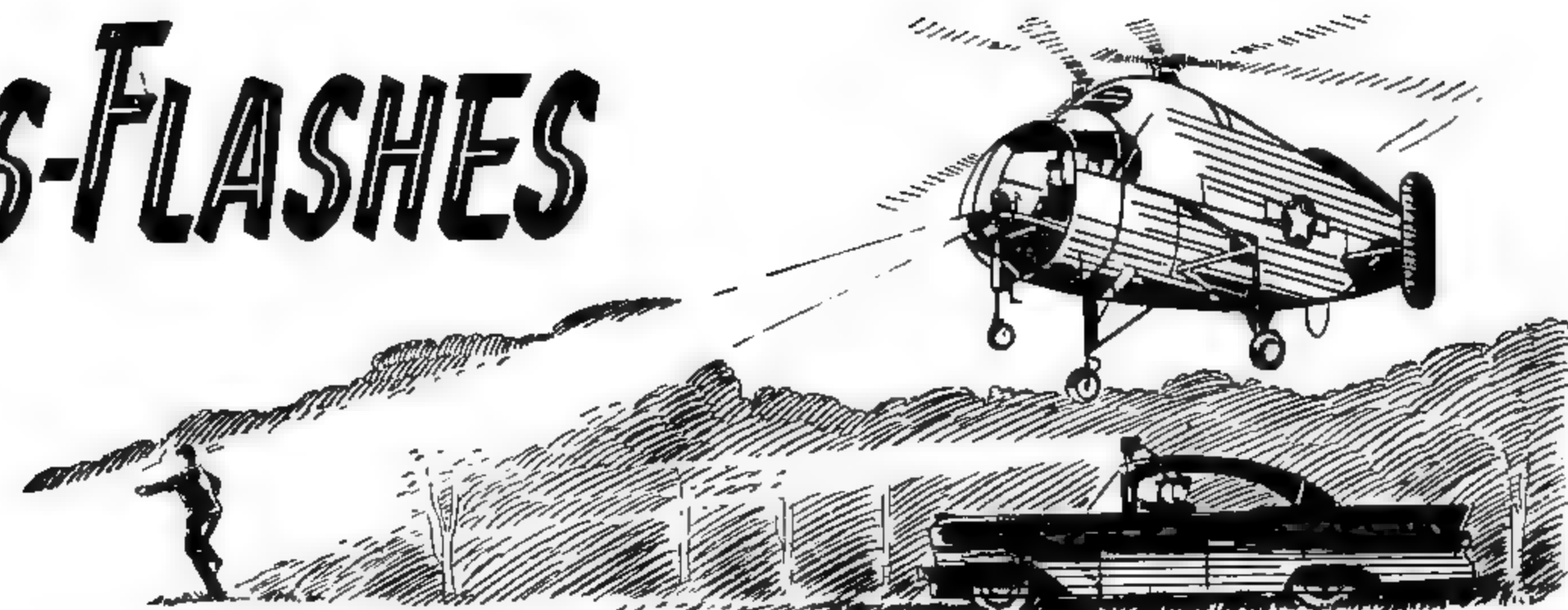


What goes up must come down—within the Earth's atmosphere anyway! But U.S. scientists make sure that their guided missiles come down a sight more slowly than they go up. Parachutes are attached to the missile so that, at the end of its fuel, it floats down gently to earth and can be recovered intact.



The Americans have developed a mobile, aircraft-launching strip which cuts out the need for a runway. The plane rests on the vehicle and is then sent aloft by means of a booster-rocket. This take-off method uses far less fuel, and this gives the aircraft a greater flying range.

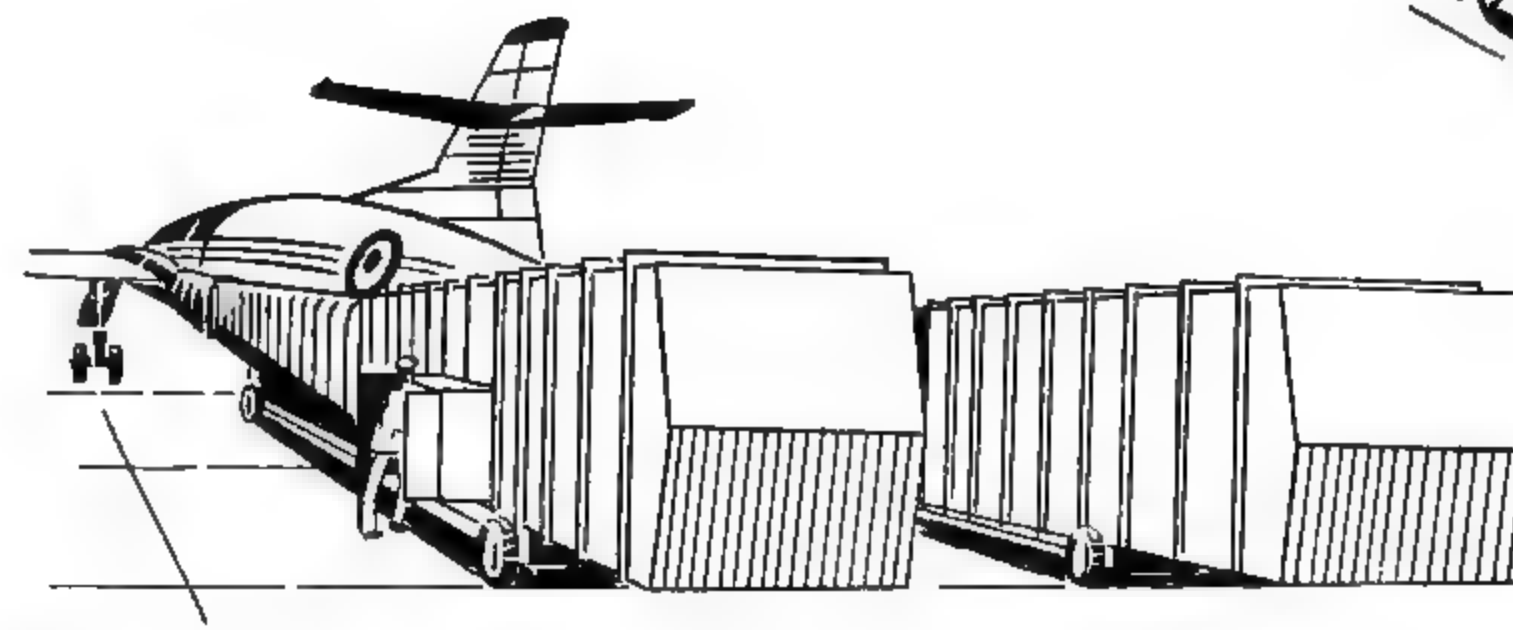
NEWS-FLASHES



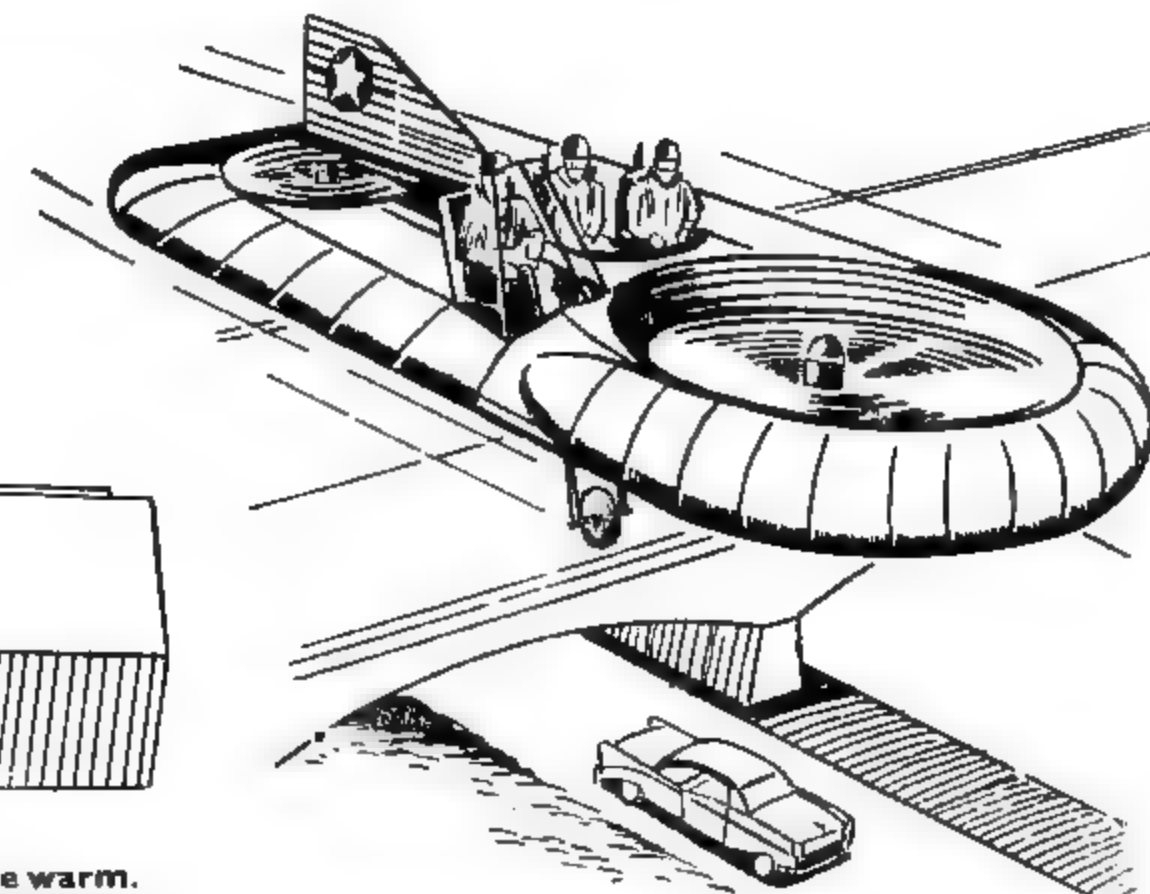
Rounding up rough-necks is becoming easier for the Texas police. 'Copter cops piloting machines fitted with search-lights soon pick out fleeing felons on the ground. Then the aerial posse transmits a radio message to the squad car crews below—and they do the rest!



Here's a Canadian rescue helicopter which is so powerful it can not only carry the survivors of an air crash to safety, but salvage the pranged kites as well. One of these machines transported a large number of passengers and the smashed up aircraft for a distance of thirty-five miles.



This Royal Navy 'plane is wearing a muffler. But it is not meant to keep the kite warm. The muffler is a long chamber fixed to each of the engines. When the latter are revved up on the ground, the muffler cuts down the noise. Even so, technicians working nearby are forced to wear ear plugs!



The latest thing in high-speed hedge-hoppers is this twin rotor runabout. The rotors are set inside the chassis, and carry the craft along at 150 m.p.h. It can fly along city streets, just a few feet up, and zoom over or under bridges!

The BUSH BANDIT MEETS HIS MATCH

BY
EDGAR
SINCLAIR



HEADING INTO TROUBLE

"MURRAY, I want this Aborigine thug, Geegari, tracked down and brought in, before he does any more mischief. I don't care how long it takes—but don't come back without him. You will take police-boy Kwagga with you to handle the tracking and you will draw sufficient food supplies from Sergeant Hagen at the stores. You will start in one hour. Anything else you need to know?"

Inspector Mackay's mouth was grim as he stared up steadily from his desk. Before him was Trooper Don Murray, who stood in the sweltering office of the police post. Beyond the window stretched the arid land of the Australian bush, shimmering in the merciless sunlight!

Murray was a husky six-footer with skin burned to the hue of weathered mahogany by the fierce sun of the Australian outback. His eyes, made amazingly blue by his brown face, watched Mackay levelly.

"Yes, there is, sir," he said quietly. "I need a few pointers on Geegari. Where was he last seen?"

Which way was he heading? If I knew that, it might save us days casting around for his tracks."

"A boundary-fence rider, for one of the cattle outfits near here, spotted him this morning at Bitter Springs. Of course Geegari slid off into the bush, and was heading north towards the Murrumbidgee Swamp. Once he gets there, it will take an army to root him out. You've got to beat him to it, trooper!"

Murray's lips parted in a faint smile and he eyed his chief coolly.

"And suppose I don't, sir," he drawled lazily, the words trailing off in silence.

Mackay looked up sharply at Murray, and then a frosty twinkle glinted in his grey, sun-puckered eyes.

"That's just too bad, Murray," he replied acidly, "because you'll be going in after him. I said it would take an army to root him out—and that's roughly equal to one trained police trooper. And you've got Kwagga to help you. It will be a nice little exercise in field-craft. Good luck, Murray!"

Don Planned to "Get His Man" by Throwing Bullets into a Fire!

The inspector dropped his head to signify the interview was over. Don Murray saluted smartly and strode thoughtfully towards the door.

"There's just one thing more, trooper," Mackay's voice snapped, as Murray reached the door. "Geegari knows the heat's on by now. He'll be looking for you—and if he's cornered he'll be desperate. Remember he's an artist with knife, boomerang or spear, so don't let him work in behind you. I've lost good troopers that way before!"

Murray nodded silently and walked out into the blinding sunlight. He had no illusions about the toughness of his assignment. For Geegari was an aboriginal, a member of one of the most primitive peoples on earth, living in isolation in the Australian bush.

For some reason Geegari had committed an offence against his tribal laws and had been cast adrift. For a whole year he had lived like an outcast, shunned by his own people and hunted by the white settlers. He became a scourge who made lightning raids on the settlers' cattle holdings and vanished in the bush, defying the efforts of men and trained dogs to find him. Forced to live the life of an animal, Geegari levied a heavy toll on the cattle-ranges for food.

Often enough irate cattlemen had found traces of Geegari and his sorties, beside long-dead campfires in the bush—the hides and horns of steers he had driven from the ranges and slaughtered for food. But always the aboriginal had eluded capture. Moving like a shadow through the wilderness of the out-back—as they called the primitive desolation of the Australian bush—using every art of his superlative skill and cunning to conceal his tracks, he had laughed at pursuit. No white man could hope to trail him unaided. The only men who could match Geegari's uncanny wizardry were his own fellows, working in the service of the police.

Murray knew he was going to need Kwagga.

In the compound he looked about him and his eyes fell on a slim, lithe black boy wearing the khaki shorts and thin vest of the service. He was squatting in the dust, playing some native game with pebbles, his flattened face creased in a friendly smile of welcome.

"Hi, Kwagga, come over here please. I'd like to talk to you," Murray called out. Kwagga uncoiled, rose to his feet in one lithe movement, and trotted towards the trooper, his iron-hard bare feet moving soundlessly over the sun-baked ground.

"I know you ketchum job, boss," greeted Kwagga. "You go ketchum Geegari. I go 'long you. Big boss say!"

"Now how the blue eucalyptus did you figure that out?" demanded Murray in surprise. "Were you listening at the window, you limb of Beelzebub!"

Kwagga grinned at Murray's amazement.

"No, boss," he chuckled. "I know Geegari at Bitter Springs this mornin'. That fella plenty sly. Then I see big boss talk you in hut. You not ketchum Geegari if I not with you. So I know."

"Okay, you grinning jackass," Murray grunted admiringly. "We move off in an hour."

The trooper had a terrific respect for Kwagga's primitive intelligence.

At the commissary he collected salt, flour, rice, matches, tobacco, and permanganate of potash in case of snake-bite. He loaded them in the saddle-panniers. Then he refilled his water-canteens and swung into the saddle of his horse. As he rode out of the post, Kwagga trotted alongside on tireless legs. The stamina of the aboriginal was such that he could out-stay any horse. And, in any case, the nearer he was to the ground the better he was able to track.

"We'll head for Bitter Springs," said Murray curtly. "If we don't pick up Geegari's tracks there, we'll cast round till we do. It's up to you, Kwagga!"

THE HUNTERS ARE HUNTED

IT was late afternoon by the time Murray reined up by the shallow basin of undrinkable alkali water, which some luckless pioneer had named Bitter Springs. He waited while Kwagga, unaffected by the six-hours jogtrot beneath the burning sun, began to cast around. Suddenly the tracker pointed to something on the ground, grunted then moved off unfalteringly into a tangle of undergrowth.

Tethering his mount, Murray followed the police boy with difficulty. At last he came up with Kwagga in a tiny clearing. The aboriginal was examining the rotting remains of a fallen log, probing it with his fingers. He straightened up and eyed Murray with a grin. In his fingers he held a fat, juicy grub.

"Geegari hungry," he explained. "Ketchum grubs to eat. Black fella—good tucker. You like, eh?"

Undeterred by the grimace of distaste on the trooper's face, Kwagga popped the grub into his mouth. He had been brought up to believe these were tasty delicacies, and so, to him, they were. Then he turned and pushed on again through the thicket with Murray behind him.

They emerged at last on to a vast plain. Faintly on the horizon, Murray saw the fringe of poisonous green growth, which marked the edge of the Murrumbidgee Swamp. He watched the aboriginal study the ground searchingly then straighten up and pointed to the horizon.

"Geegari plenty smart fella," Kwagga grunted grudgingly. "He know we after him. Make for Murrumbidgee. That bad place for white man, boss. I go look—you stay here."

"Not a chance," Murray said resolutely. "Your job is to track—my job is to bring him in. We go in together. Come on, let's get it over with."

As the two men started to move out across the plain, the undergrowth on the edge of the swamp parted to reveal a cruel face. The nose was broken, the forehead sloping into a matted mass of hair. Geegari stepped from cover. His upper body was mud-daubed, his cheeks and chest crusted with the healed-up scars of sacrificial cuts. The arms were thin and knotted, the body lean and emaciated—but within that wiry frame were packed the power and stamina of a mountain lion.

For a full minute Geegari watched his pursuers, his deep-set eyes glittering with malevolent hatred. At last, satisfied with what he saw, he planted his bare foot deliberately in a patch of wet mud then ducked back inside the swamp. Swiftly he uprooted a thorny switch from the bushes, sharpened its end to a point with his knife, then tore down a creeper and set to work. He rose eventually, contemplated his handiwork with a thin smile, then turned and glided like a shadow into the thicket.

Geegari had prepared a trap for the mounted trooper who represented the forces of law and order which hunted him.

An hour later, Murray reined up on the edge of the notorious Murrumbidgee swamp. The stench of rotting vegetation caught at his nose and throat. The air was dank with decay. From within rose the incessant humming of hordes of fever-carrying mosquitoes. While Kwagga set to prospecting the marshy ground for Geegari's tracks, the trooper slid down from his horse and waited.

An eager cry from Kwagga spurred him into movement.

"There he go, boss," exulted the aboriginal. "Black fella he go inside. Here his track!"

Murray stooped to examine the footprint which Geegari had left purposely in the slimy ooze. But something tugged at Don's sense of caution, instilled in him by years of experience in the bush. Why should an expert like Geegari leave so obvious a trail? He could find no answer—so Murray motioned to Kwagga and followed him into the swamp.

Ten yards inside, the sunlight vanished and they were moving in a hideous, green twilight. Sweat burst in streams from Murray's body. Myriads of mosquitoes swooped down to attack his unprotected face and arms. But he pressed on implacably.

Suddenly Kwagga ran ahead, pointing to a discarded shred of cloth on the ground. In the same instant, some sixth sense warned Murray of impending danger. His eyes travelled onward and there, in Kwagga's path, he saw the strand of creeper stretched at ankle-height above the mud. Beyond it he saw the pale glimmer of the freshly-peeled, spear-like stake, as it stood propped at an angle in the marshy ground.

In one gigantic bound Murray hurled himself

forward. His flailing left hand scythed the little tracker aside and sent him sprawling into the undergrowth.

But Murray's very impetus was nearly his own undoing. His foot touched the taut creeper. There was a vicious twang and the stake, released by the tripwire action of the creeper, launched upwards towards Murray in a silent, deadly arc. The trooper ducked swiftly. He felt the missile graze his shoulder before it buried itself in the jungle greenery. Geegari's cunning trap—a sort of crude bow arrangement had misfired.

Kwagga rose to his feet, scowling with injured vanity.

"You save my life, boss," he grunted, as he found the stake and turned it in his fingers. "Geegari fool me—but he not do it again."

"That trick was smart enough to fool anyone, Kwagga," said Murray grimly. "It just shows what we're up against. Better keep close to me and watch for an ambush. This swamp is made to measure for a thug like Geegari."

They set off slowly into the interior, pausing at intervals to listen intently. But the endless buzzing of insects, and the chattering cries of the cookaburra birds, disturbed by their passage, effectively covered any sounds that might have been made by the fugitive.

Presently Kwagga stopped. He indicated a flattened clump of grass where Geegari had set an incautious foot. Already the grass-blades were beginning to grow erect again. Murray needed no explanation. The cunning aboriginal had passed the spot only minutes ahead of them.

"Black fella pretty close," murmured Kwagga. "Maybe he wait for us. All he need is space to throw spear."

Kwagga made a vivid movement of his right arm in the throwing stance of the aboriginal, and Murray nodded grimly. Experience had taught him to respect the uncanny accuracy and silence of this weapon in his hands of a native. He had once seen an aboriginal pierce an inch-thick sapling at a distance of thirty yards!

Instinctively he hunched his shoulders and tapped the revolver holster at his waist for reassurance. Then his jaw dropped in dismay!

The leather flap of the holster hung open, wrenched away from its securing clip!

The revolver had gone!

In the incident with the stake, it must have fallen from the holster unnoticed. It was too late to retrace his steps back to the spot. And even if he did, it would have been an insuperable task to find it in the matted undergrowth. The chances were that it had long since sunk out of sight in the primeval ooze of the swamp. The only weapon he had left was a small jack-knife.

Fortunately Kwagga had not noticed the trooper's dilemma. And Murray decided to keep it to himself. Kwagga carried a knife with which to defend himself. Their only hope lay in stalking Geegari till they could rush him at close quarters and overpower him by brute strength.

"I'll take the lead, Kwagga," Murray muttered. "Keep low and watch every step. And keep an eye open on our rear. There's a chance he may try to circle us and come up from behind!"

They had reached the heart of the swamp. Ahead of them in the green twilight filtering down from the trees overhead, Murray saw a muddy stream winding sluggishly between banks covered with undergrowth. The two men moved forward cautiously. While Kwagga stooped to examine the ground for imprints, Murray crouched above him, his eyes searching the tangled thicket on the opposite bank.

Presently Kwagga rose with a perplexed frown.

"Geegari not go this way," he muttered decisively, and pointed to a dense thicket which stretched away on either side of them along the bank. From its branches sprouted long, cruel-looking thorns—the deadly 'wait-awhile' thorns of the Australian bush. "Even black fella not go over this. Where he go then?"

"What would you do, Kwagga, if you were Geegari?" Don asked thoughtfully.

The aboriginal watched Murray with a reflective frown, then his eyes moved upwards to the tangle of creepers which trailed down to the ground from the trees overhead.

"I go up in tree," he announced without hesitation. "That way I leave no track. Then I drop behind you. I can do two things—run away or follow you and kill!"

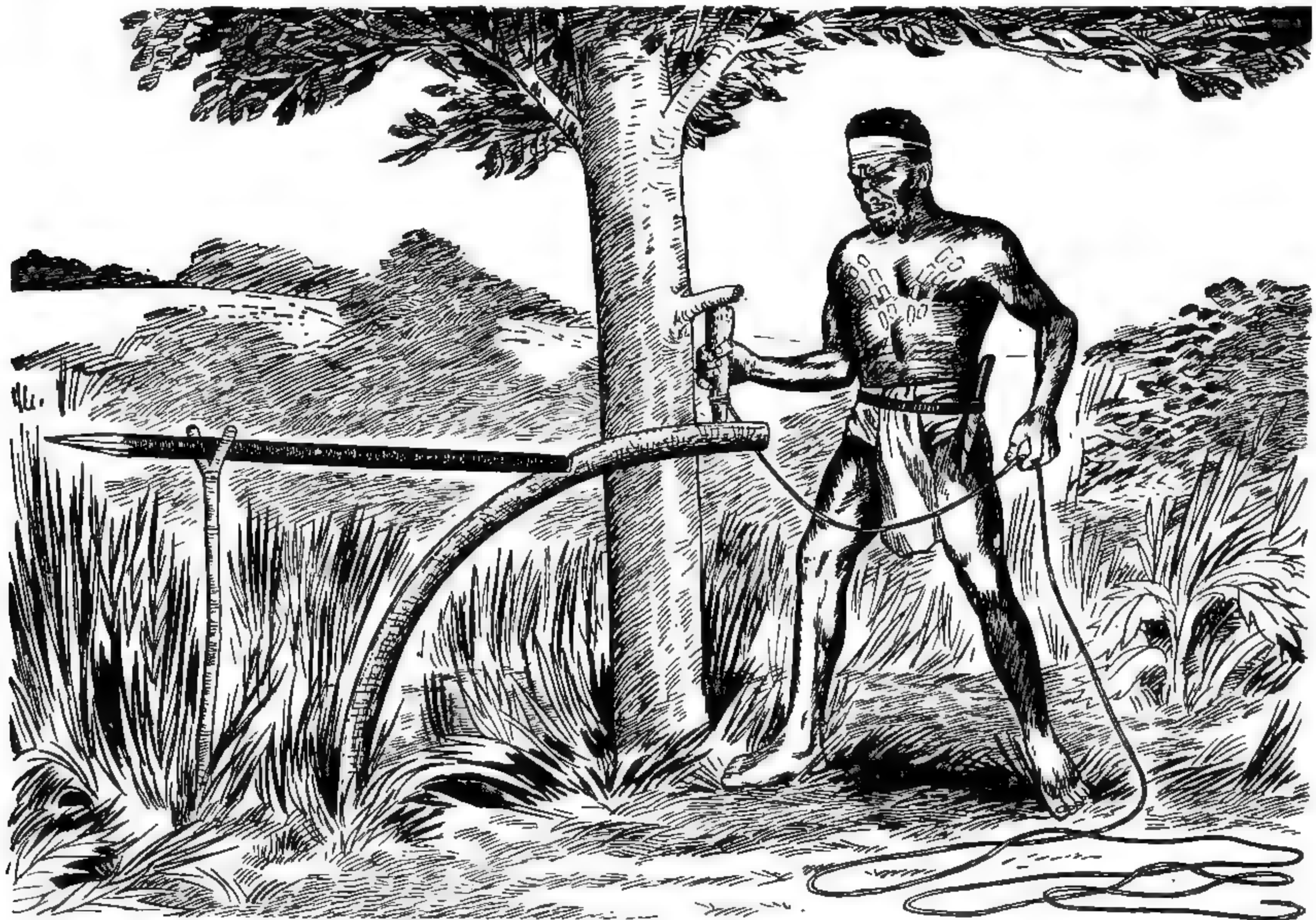
"That's just what I figured too," nodded Murray. "I've a fancy he's been trailing us all the time!"

Suddenly Kwagga's tongue clicked warningly. His eyes turned to watch the way they had come.

"You right, boss," he whispered. "Black fella back there. I think I see him move."

In the same instant a gout of flame burst from the greenery. A report re-echoed through the twilight trees, driving the frightened birds up onto the wing in protesting panic. A bullet crashed into the thicket beside Murray.

Even as he dropped to the ground alongside Kwagga, his practised ear had registered the calibre of the gun from the roar of the explosion. It was a police revolver! Somehow Geegari had got possession of Murray's weapon, probably when he



With patience and cunning, the native at last completed his ingenious booby-trap. Would it bring sudden death to Trooper Don Murray?

had circled back to check on the spring-trap he had laid for his pursuers!

Now the hunters were being hunted in turn. And Geegari held all the cards!

INSECT ALLIES!

BUT worse was to come. As Murray lifted his head, he heard Kwagga moan softly. The aboriginal was clutching his thigh, his face tightening with pain and shock. Geegari's bullet had found its mark. A deep gash had scored the police-boy's thigh!

"You go leave me, boss," muttered Kwagga. "I no good now. No run, or even walk. I wait here for Geegari to make rush and try to get with knife. You go into water and wade out of swamp. Your only chance."

Murray's jaw clamped tight.

"Not on your life," he murmured. "We're both getting out of here—or we're dead ducks. I'll figure out something. That black ape's outsmarted us right enough, but we're not finished yet. If I could only get my hands on him, this fight would be over!"

As if in anticipation of the trooper's thoughts, a deep voice rang out from the twilit depths of the trees.

"You, white fella, you no chance. You come ketchum me—now I ketchum you. What you do now? You no bang-stick. I got."

"Okay, if that's what you think, Geegari," Murray called out. "You think I've got no gun, why don't you find out? Start walking and see what happens."

A burst of mocking laughter answered him. Murray was playing for time. He had to hold off the aboriginal until he could figure a way of escape. And the one man who could have helped him lay crippled and helpless.

Geegari had stepped out into the open. Murray could make out his mud-daubed chest and thick, brutish features in the gloom of the swamp.

"You lie, white fella," Geegari boomed. "You one big bluff. Now I come get!"

Murray ran his fingers over the cartridges in his belt. They were useless without the gun. He glanced up to see Geegari walking slowly towards him, the gun brandished in his hands, his face creased in a grin of gloating triumph.

And then in the very moment of defeat, Murray's racing brain fastened on a possible solution. Reaching out he tore handfuls of the thicket and gathered them into a heap. A match crackled and the flames ran through the resinous twigs, spitting and sparking. Into the heart of the flames Murray tossed half a dozen cartridges then he flattened his body to the ground.

He was taking a desperate chance. When the heat of the flames detonated the slugs they would

fly in all directions—and he was only a yard or two away. But there was nothing else for it. He was trying to bluff Geegari. If it didn't pay off, then he and Kwagga would die.

The aboriginal halted at the sight of the flames. Peering through the tangle of thicket Murray could see the glow of the flames reflected in the other man's features.

"Why you make fire, white fella?" Geegari mocked. "It do you no good."

"I'm warning you, Geegari," Murray called out firmly. "Turn yourself in before it's too late. I'm going to shoot now. Better throw that gun away while you have the chance."

Murray waited, holding his breath in suspense. Would his ruse work? Or would Geegari get close enough to see that Murray was unarmed. If he did, that would be the end.

"I think you bluff, white fella," Geegari spoke at length. "You no got bang-stick!"

He started walking towards Murray, slowly and purposefully. He was ten paces away. Soon he would be near enough to expose the trooper's bluff.

And then the centre of the fire seemed to explode in a series of machine-gun fusillades, as the cartridges detonated in quick succession. One of them whipped at Murray's vest while he pressed his body to the ground. But the other slugs, radiating in all directions, had had the intended effect. Convinced that he had run into a hail of fire from the trooper's gun, Geegari gave a shrill yelp of fear and fled frantically for safety.

Murray rose to his feet with the idea of getting to grips with the aboriginal while he was still demoralised, but the black fellow had already melted into the trees. Murray had bought a renewed lease of life for himself and Kwagga by his successful ruse but he knew it could not last long. As soon as Geegari had recovered from his panic, his hatred would be redoubled. He would set out to stalk his victims in silence. From now on he would be doubly dangerous.

Murray turned to Kwagga and examined the wound in the boy's thigh. Luckily it was not serious but the tracker was weak from loss of blood. In his condition he was only a liability on Murray.

"We've got to get that gash fixed somehow, Kwagga," muttered the trooper dubiously. "A dressing won't be enough. That wound ought to be stitched before it gets infected."

"I fix that, boss," grinned Kwagga.

The tracker rose shakily to his feet and while Murray watched in puzzlement he began to search among the roots of the thicket on the stream-bank. Presently he came back with a nest-like structure of moss and dried grass, holding it gingerly on the end of a forked stick.

"What in thunder have you got there?" rasped

Murray, "This is a fine time to go bird-nesting."

"You wait, boss," nodded Kwagga. "I show you something."

Kwagga set the nest carefully on the ground then crouched a few feet away from it, watching intently. A trickle of outraged ants began to emerge from the nest looking for their tormentor, their huge pincers poised menacingly before them.

Murray at once recognised them as the formidable green ant of the bush. Although tiny creatures they had a ferocious disposition and the bite of their pincers stung like liquid fire. He watched wonderingly while Kwagga picked one up deftly with his right hand, while his left hand held closed the gash on his injured thigh.

Deliberately he pressed the head of the ant so that its pincers closed on either side of the gash. The pincers sank home viciously. Not a muscle moved in the aboriginal's face at the stab of pain. Coolly he nipped off the body so that the head and pincers remained attached to his wound.

He repeated the operation with a score of the ants than rose to his feet happily. The lips of the gash were held tightly closed as if by surgical clamps. Soon, thanks to the marvellous powers of recuperation of the aboriginal, he would be moving about as freely as ever.

Murray's eyes left Kwagga and turned to the nest still lying on the ground. Already an idea was beginning to take shape in his mind.

"Hold on, Kwagga," he rasped. "Maybe we could use these ants to trap Geegari. First we've got to draw him out of cover. And the best way to do that is to show myself."

"No good, boss," grunted Kwagga. "He too sly for that."

"It's worth trying, Kwagga," snapped Murray. "Now listen to me."

Briefly he explained his plan while the aboriginal watched his face. At the end of it, Kwagga's features creased in a huge grin of delighted anticipation.

"Okay, boss," he chuckled. "We try. Geegari plenty smart—but maybe we smarter." Then his face lengthened in concern. "You watchum black fella not get you. White folks got plenty savvy—but not with ears and eyes!"

Murray grinned and stepped boldly out into the open. He began to walk back in the direction he had seen Geegari take in his flight. He was gambling on the fact that the aboriginal, unnerved by the exploding cartridges had fled blindly through the swamp.

As he walked Murray cupped his hands to his mouth and called out, his voice echoing through the trees.

"Kwagga! Where the blazes are you? Answer me, you imp!"

Soon he had passed out of sight of Kwagga. He was alone. Somewhere in the surrounding thicket, for all he knew, Geegari might be lying in wait, the deadly throwing-spear poised in his hand. At the thought of the tempting target offered by his own broad shoulders, Murray felt the hair rise on his head. But it was a chance he had to take. The essence of the plan was that he should lure Geegari after him into the ambush laid for him.

Every sense alerted, Murray listened intently, straining his ears for the last sound which would betray the presence of his quarry. At last he detected a faint rustle in the undergrowth. He paused then turned casually and began to walk back the way he had come, fighting down the temptation to look backwards over his shoulder. A cold sweat ran down his forehead.

Moving with deliberate casualness through the swamp, he returned to his original starting point. Kwagga had now disappeared. Once of twice the trooper imagined he heard a dull padding behind him, but he kept on resolutely until he had reached the bank of the stream.

Now, if his plans had worked out right, should come the pay-off. It came with a sudden demented shriek which re-echoed through the swamp. Murray swung round to see Geegari! He was rolling on the ground, his hands tearing and beating at his face and head with frantic energy. The crumpled remains of the green-ant nest lay on the ground beside him. Murray looked up to see Kwagga slide down a creeper from the tree overhead where he had waited for Geegari with the ant-nest ready. His aim had been perfect!

Swiftly Murray ran back and disarmed the groaning native.

"Me get him, boss," crowed Kwagga proudly. "He stand to throw spear at you—then I get him."

Geegari sat in a disconsolate heap. The ant-stings had driven all the fight out of him.

Murray yanked him to his feet and pointed ahead.

"Okay, Geegari, let's get back to the post," he commanded crisply. "You'll have time to get over this—a long time. And while you're in jail, think of this: When you lay a trap, for a man, always remember he may have the same idea. Now get going!"

THE END

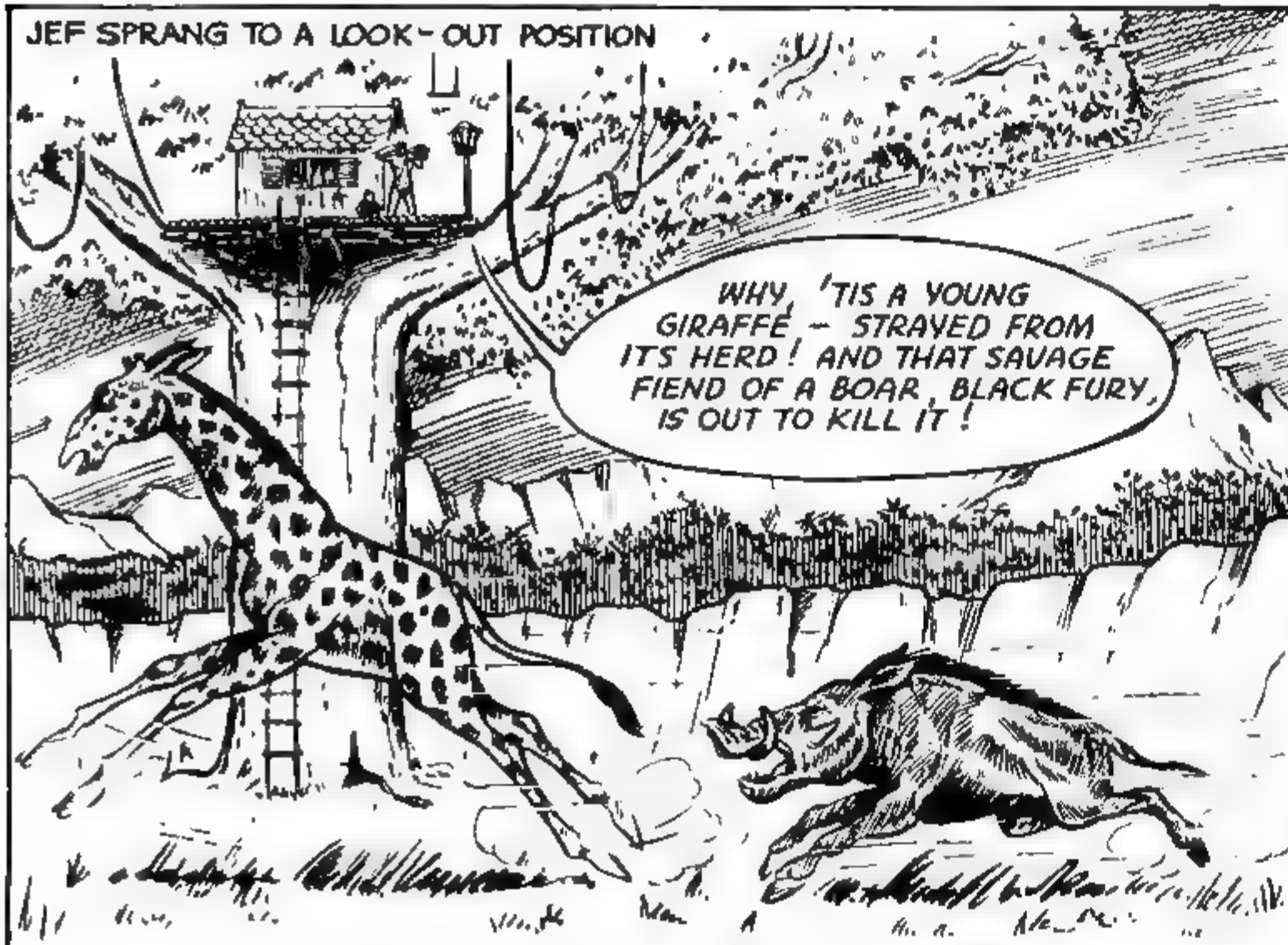
JUNGLE JEF AND THE LOST GIRAFFE

BY
REX
KING

JEF HAD BEEN LOST IN THE AFRICAN JUNGLE WHEN A CHILD, AND HAD GROWN UP AMONG THE WILD ANIMALS. HIS CLOSEST FRIENDS WERE CHEEKO THE CHIMPANZEE, BOKO THE PARROT AND TUSKER THE YOUNG ELEPHANT. HE HAD BUILT HIMSELF A HUT IN A TREE, AND WHEN RETURNING TO IT ONE EVENING, HE SAW BOKO FLYING EXCITEDLY TOWARDS HIM. THE PARROT WAS SQUAWKING A WARNING



JEF SPRANG TO A LOOK-OUT POSITION



THE JUNGLE LAD GRABBED A LIANA AND SWUNG SWIFTLY DOWNWARDS



JEF RACED INTO THE JUNGLE, WITH HIS ANIMAL FRIENDS CLOSE AT HIS HEELS



MEANWHILE, IN ITS TERROR, THE YOUNG GIRAFFE LEAPT INTO A DEEP AND DEADLY MUDHOLE



BAULKED OF ITS PREY, THE SAVAGE BOAR GAVE A SNARL OF FURY. THEN, AT THE SOUND OF CRASHING IN THE UNDERGROWTH, IT TURNED AND FLED



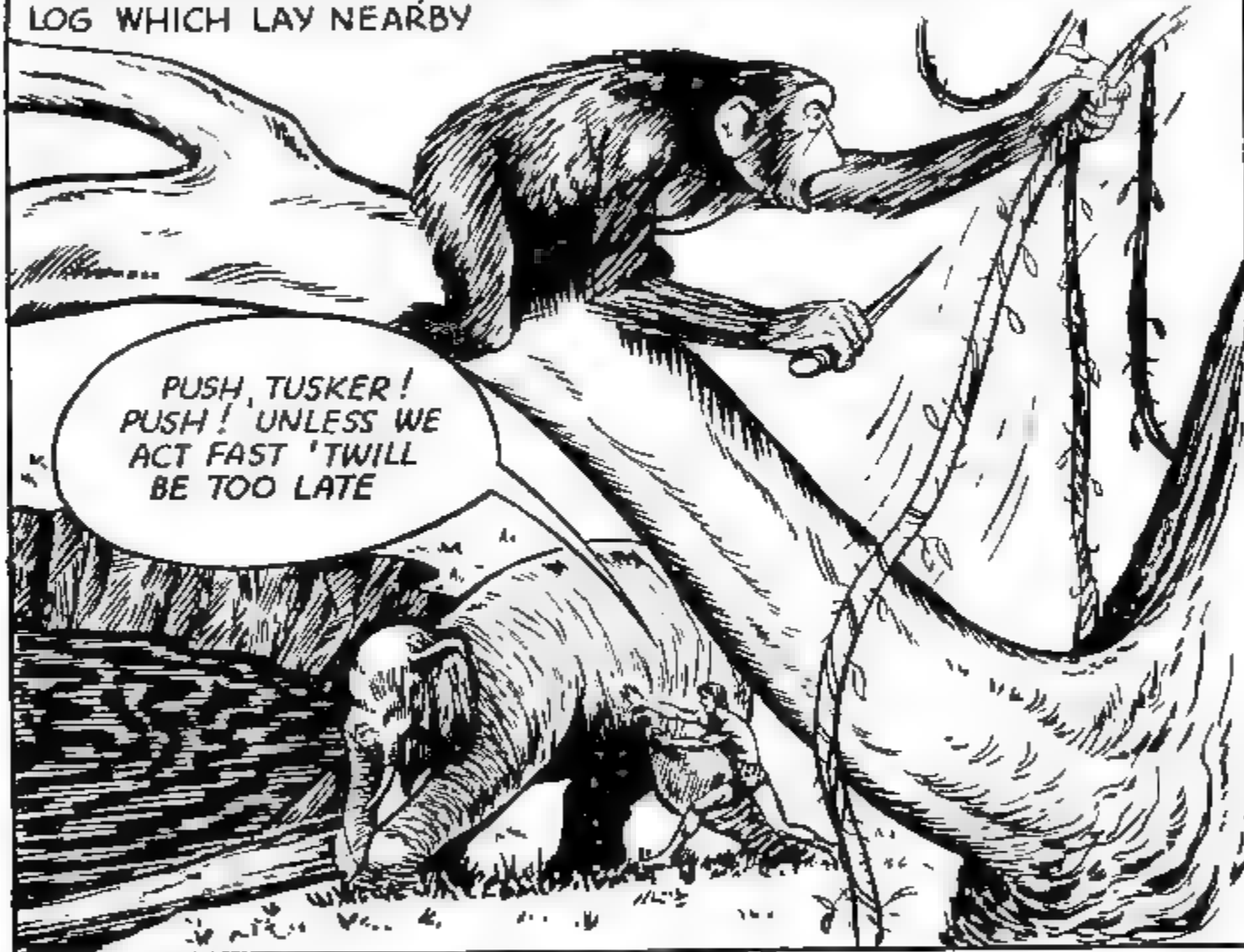
JEF REACHED THE MUDHOLE AND TOOK IN THE SITUATION AT A GLANCE

THE LITTLE LONGNECK IS SINKING TO HIS DOOM! GO ALOFT WITH THIS KNIFE, CHEEKO, AND CUT DOWN SOME LIANAS. HURRY!



WHILE CHEEKO DID SO, JEF GOT TUSKER TO THRUST AT A GREAT LOG WHICH LAY NEARBY

PUSH, TUSKER! PUSH! 'UNLESS WE ACT FAST 'T'WILL BE TOO LATE



THEN JEF SPRANG TO CATCH THE STRONG LIANA ROPES THAT THE CHIMP HAD CUT

GOOD BOY, CHEEKO!



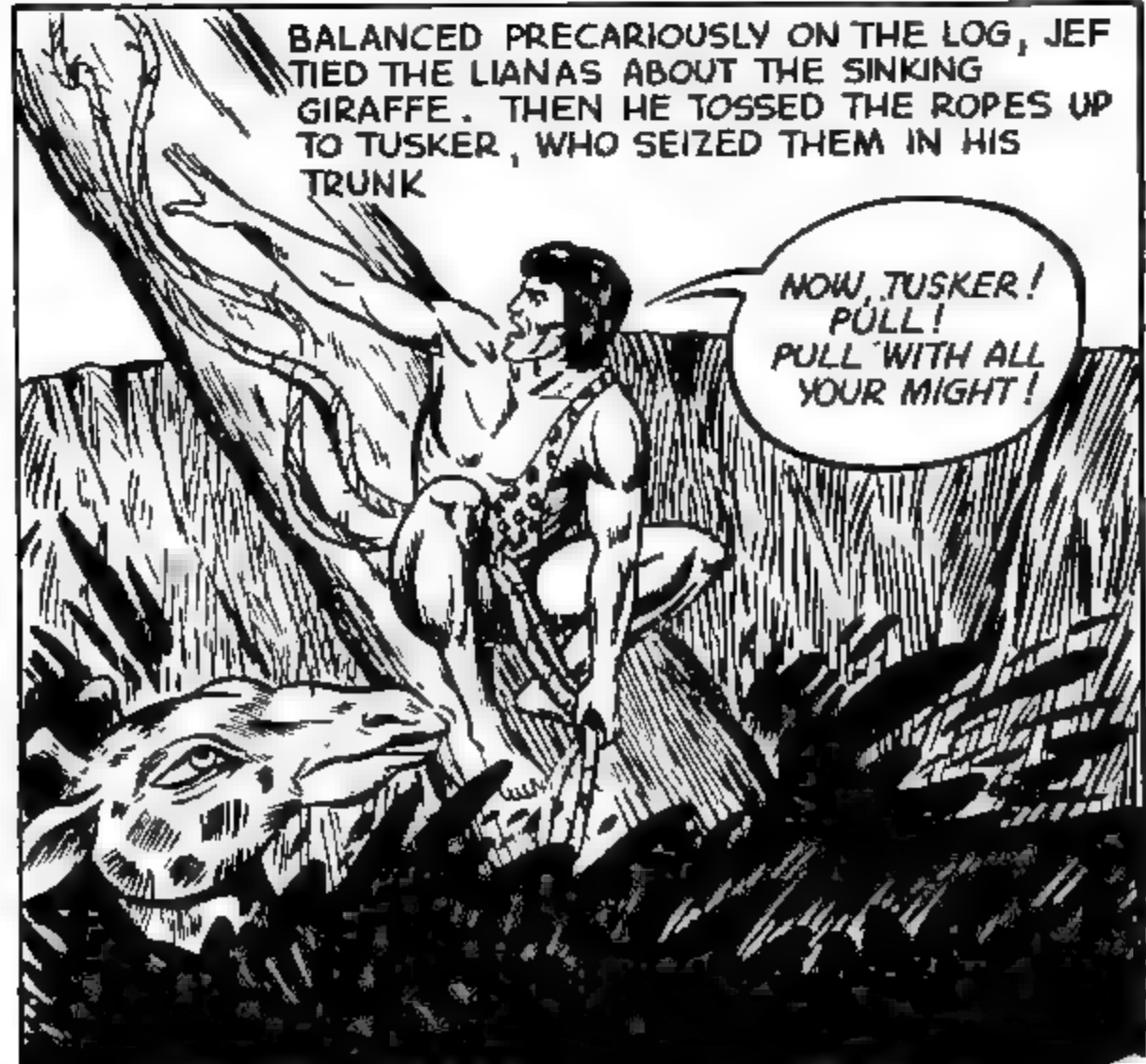
THE JUNGLE LAD MADE HIS WAY DOWN THE PERILOUSLY-SLOPING LOG TO WHERE THE FLOUNDERING YOUNG GIRAFFE WAS SINKING DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE MIRE

COURAGE, LITTLE LONGNECK! I COME TO YOUR AID

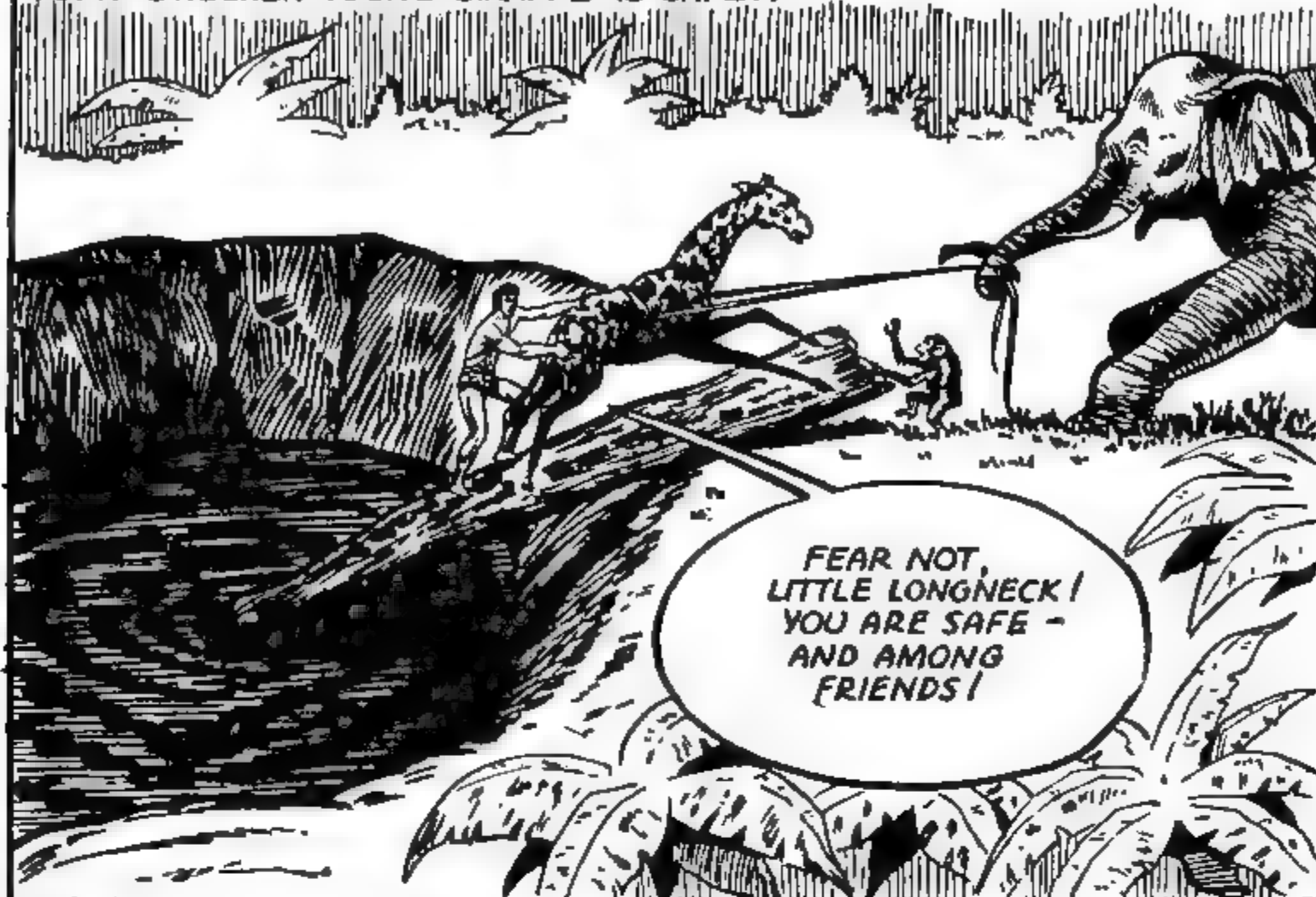


BALANCED PRECARIOUSLY ON THE LOG, JEF TIED THE LIANAS ABOUT THE SINKING GIRAFFE. THEN HE TOSSED THE ROPES UP TO TUSKER, WHO SEIZED THEM IN HIS TRUNK

NOW, TUSKER! PULL! PULL WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT!



HELPED BY THE MUSCULAR JUNGLE LAD, TUSKER HAULED THE FEAR-STRICKEN YOUNG GIRAFFE TO SAFETY



YOU MUST HAVE WANDERED FROM YOUR TRIBE. BUT YOU ARE MUCH TOO YOUNG TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF. YOU WOULD NOT LONG SURVIVE THE MANY PERILS OF THE FORESTS. FIRST THING IN THE MORNING I WILL FIND YOUR TRIBE AND RETURN YOU TO IT



ON THE WAY TO JEF'S TREE-HOME HE NOTICED THAT THE YOUNG GIRAFFE WAS LIMPING

THE LITTLE LONGNECK HAS HURT HIS LEG



THE JUNGLE LAD GATHERED SOME LARGE HERBAL LEAVES

THESE SHOULD SOON MAKE IT WELL



HE BOUND THEM ROUND THE ANIMAL'S INJURED LEG



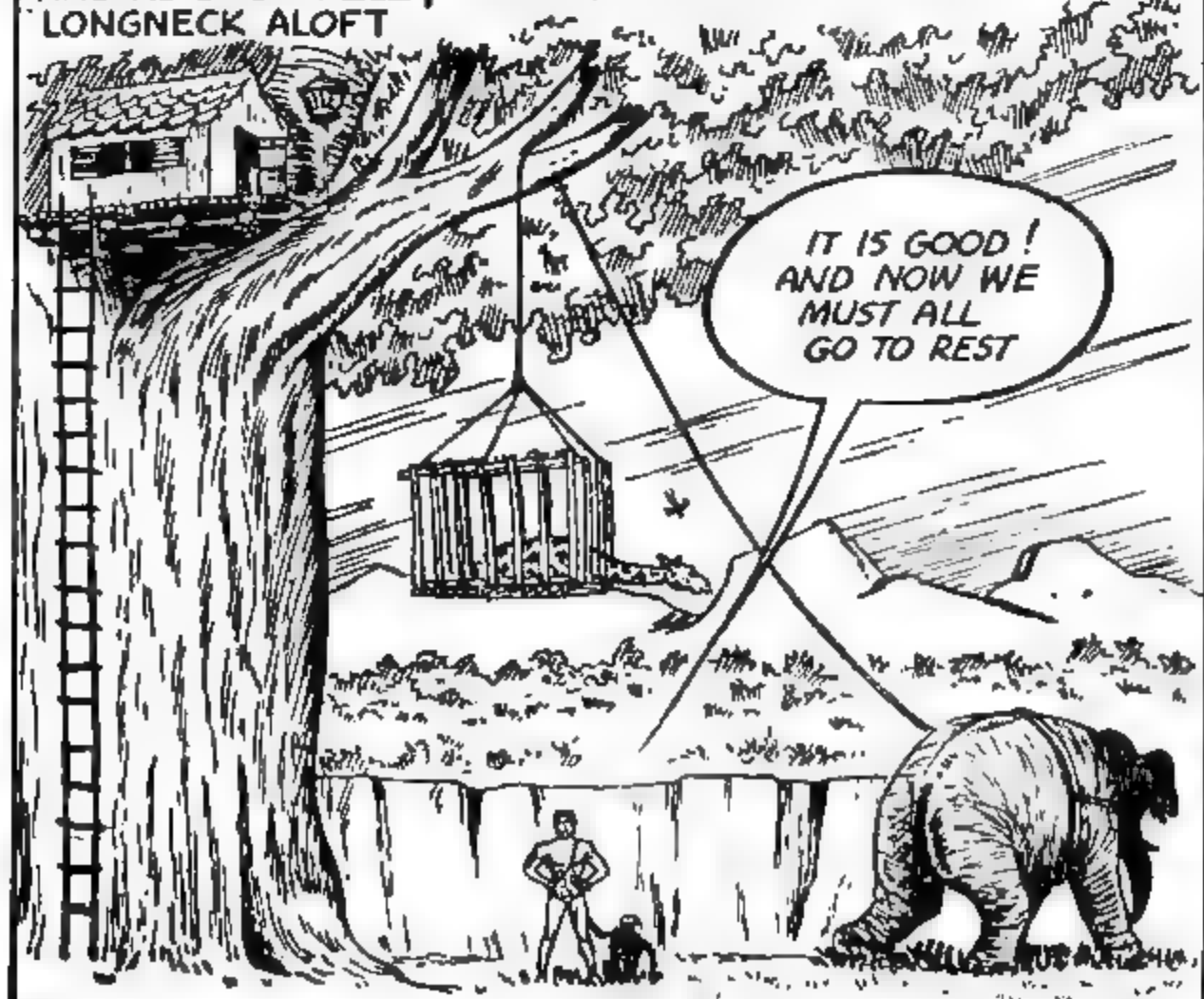
EVEN MISCHIEVOUS CHEEKO SEEMED TAKEN WITH THEIR NEW FRIEND, AND EAGERLY HELPED TO FEED HIM

WE MUST PUT HIM IN A SAFE PLACE FOR THE NIGHT WHERE SAVAGE BEASTS CANNOT REACH HIM



JEF SET TO WORK TO CONSTRUCT A BAMBOO CAGE. AND AS DUSK FELL, TUSKER HOISTED THE LITTLE LONGNECK ALOFT

IT IS GOOD! AND NOW WE MUST ALL GO TO REST



WHEN THE SUN ROSE NEXT MORNING, JEF CLIMBED THE TREE HIGH ABOVE HIS JUNGLE HOME

THERE GOES THE GIRAFFE HERD! BUT THEY ARE MOVING AWAY AROUND THE GREAT LAKE. UNLESS WE ACT WITH GREAT SPEED, WE SHALL NEVER CATCH UP WITH THEM.



JEF FROWNED THOUGHTFULLY

WITH HIS HURT LEG, THE LITTLE LONGNECK WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO KEEP UP A FAST PACE. BUT ONCE HIS TRIBE HAVE VANISHED BEYOND THE GREAT LAKE, WE MAY NEVER FIND THEM AGAIN! WE WILL SAVE MANY HOURS BY GOING DIRECT ACROSS THE WATER INSTEAD OF ROUND THE EDGE



THEN A SUDDEN IDEA FLASHED INTO HIS MIND

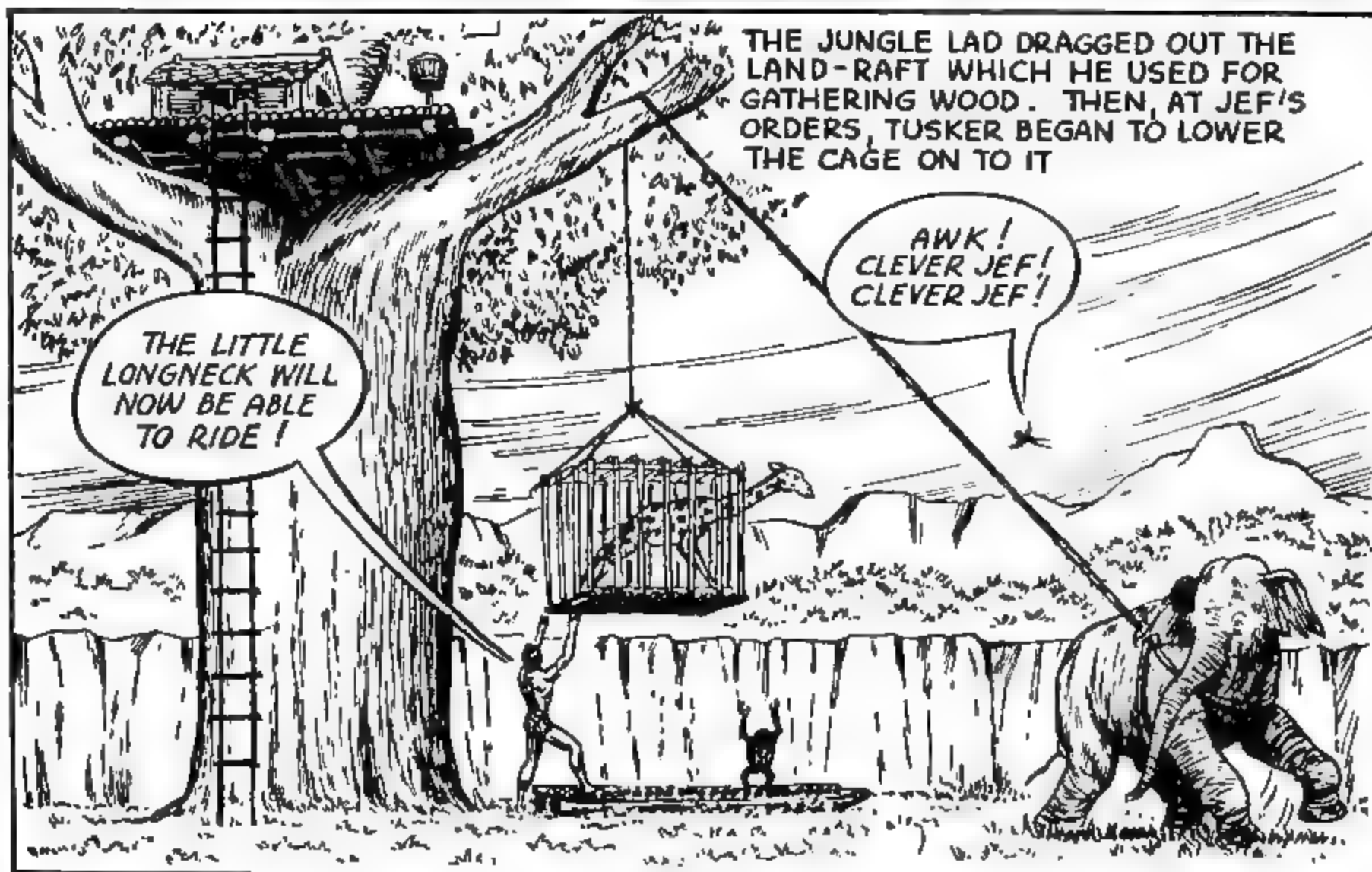
WAIT! I KNOW HOW WE CAN TAKE HIM! HO, TUSKER! HITHER!



THE LITTLE LONGNECK WILL NOW BE ABLE TO RIDE!

THE JUNGLE LAD DRAGGED OUT THE LAND-RAFT WHICH HE USED FOR GATHERING WOOD. THEN, AT JEF'S ORDERS, TUSKER BEGAN TO LOWER THE CAGE ON TO IT

AWK! CLEVER JEF! CLEVER JEF!



THE FRIENDS SET OFF, TUSKER TOWING THE CAGE. BUT AGAIN AND AGAIN THEY WERE HALTED BY DENSE UNDERGROWTH

'TIS NO USE! WE'LL NEVER REACH THE LAKE IN TIME BY WAY OF THE JUNGLE. WE MUST TAKE TO THE OPEN BUSH COUNTRY — THE WAY OF PERIL!



THEY SWUNG OFF THE JUNGLE TRAIL, JEF NOW ARMED WITH A STOUT POLE

THIS IS THE KINGDOM OF BLACK FURY — THE TERRITORY OF THE SAVAGE WILD BOARS WHO KILL WITHOUT MERCY! BUT WE MUST RISK THEIR ATTACK IF WE ARE TO WIN THROUGH. COME! ONWARD!



EYES ALERT FOR ANY DANGER, JEF RACED ALONGSIDE THE LAND-RAFT AS IT SPED THROUGH THE PERILOUS BUSH COUNTRY

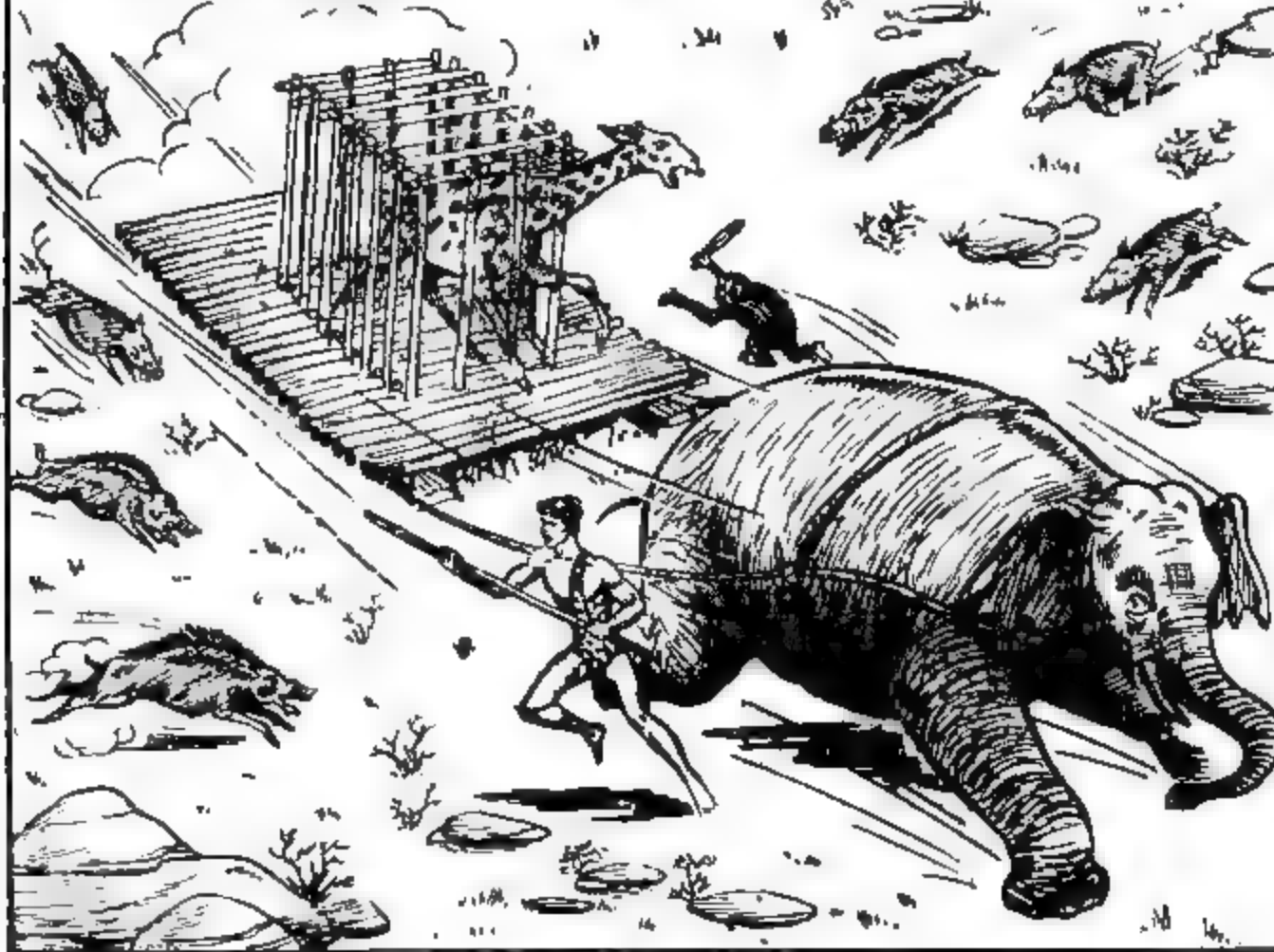
NOW WE ARE
MOVING MORE SWIFTLY! AND
THERE IS NO SIGN YET OF THE BOAR
TRIBES. KEEP PULLING, O TUSKER



BUT THE LITTLE PARTY HAD BEEN SIGHTED BY THE
HERD OF SAVAGE BOARS



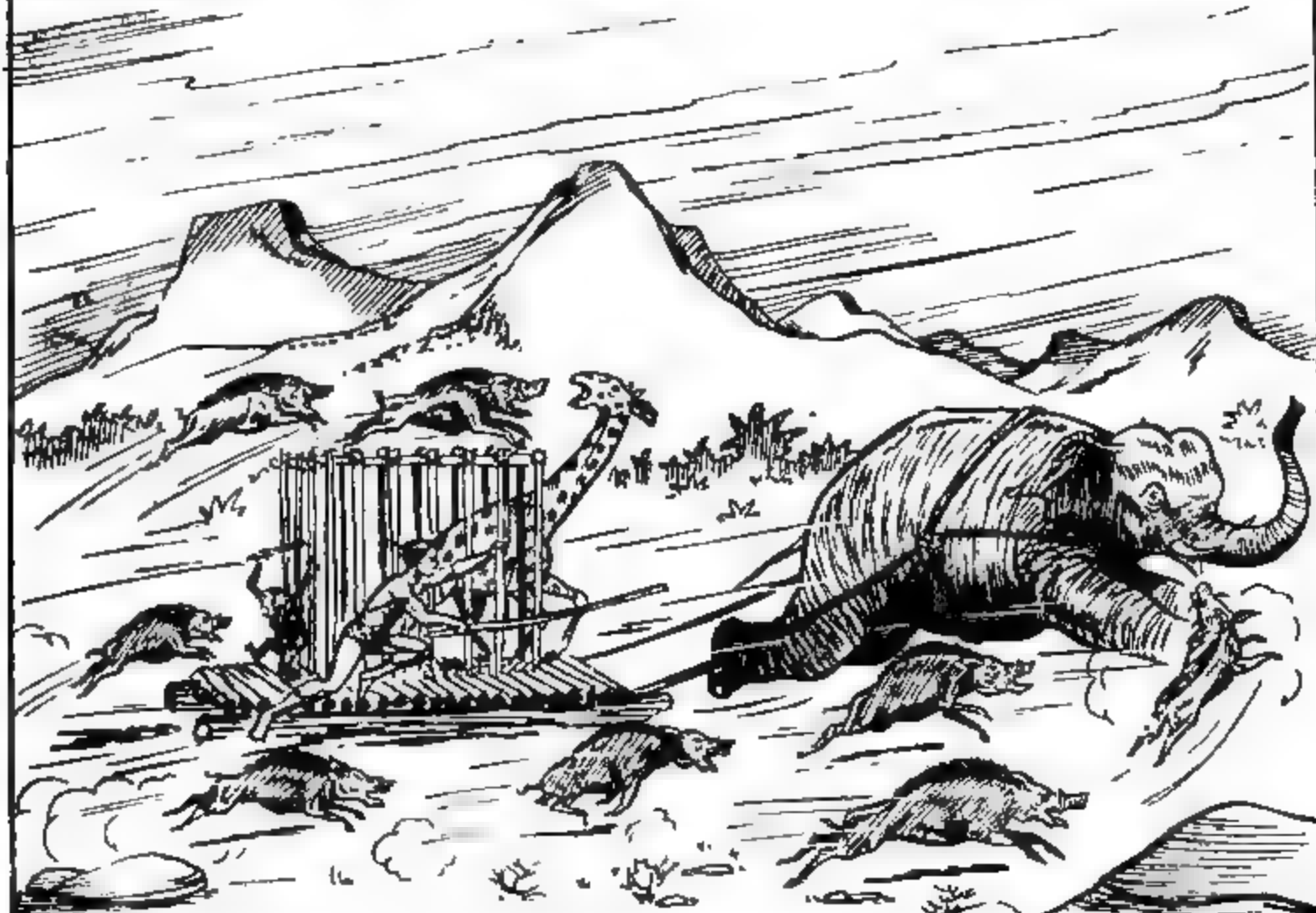
A FEW SECONDS LATER THEY POUNCED FROM AMBUSH WITH
SCREECHES OF RAGE, DETERMINED TO WIPE OUT THE INVADERS
OF THEIR TERRITORY



CHATTERING WITH EXCITEMENT, CHEEKO SENT ONE
BOAR REELING



BUT MORE OF THE FEROCIOUS BEASTS SPRANG ON TO THE SPEEDING
LAND-RAFT



DESPERATELY JEF DID HIS UTMOST TO BEAT
THEM OFF

TAKE THAT,
O TREACHEROUS
FANGED ONE!



AS THE JUNGLE LAD AND CHEEKO BATTLED FOR THEIR LIVES, THE LAND-RAFT HURTLED DOWN A LONG SLOPE

FIGHT ON, BRAVE CHEEKO! ONCE THEY GAIN A FOOTHOLD WE ARE LOST!



THEN JEF LET OUT A VELL

THE LAKE! IT LIES AHEAD! BUT WE DARE NOT HALT!



'TIS DEATH TO STOP! ON, TUSKER! INTO THE WATER!

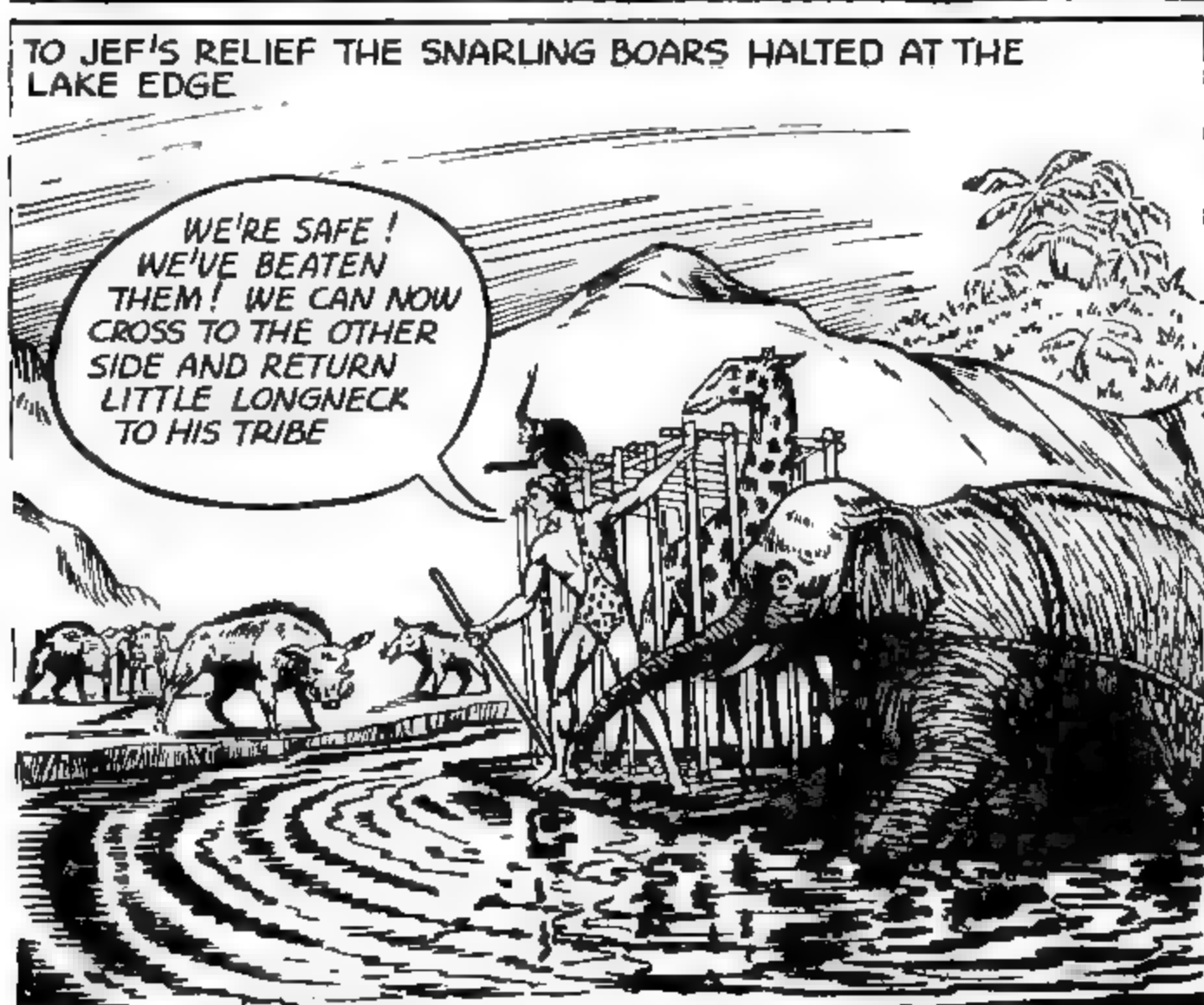


HOLD TIGHT!



TO JEF'S RELIEF THE SNARLING BOARS HALTED AT THE LAKE EDGE

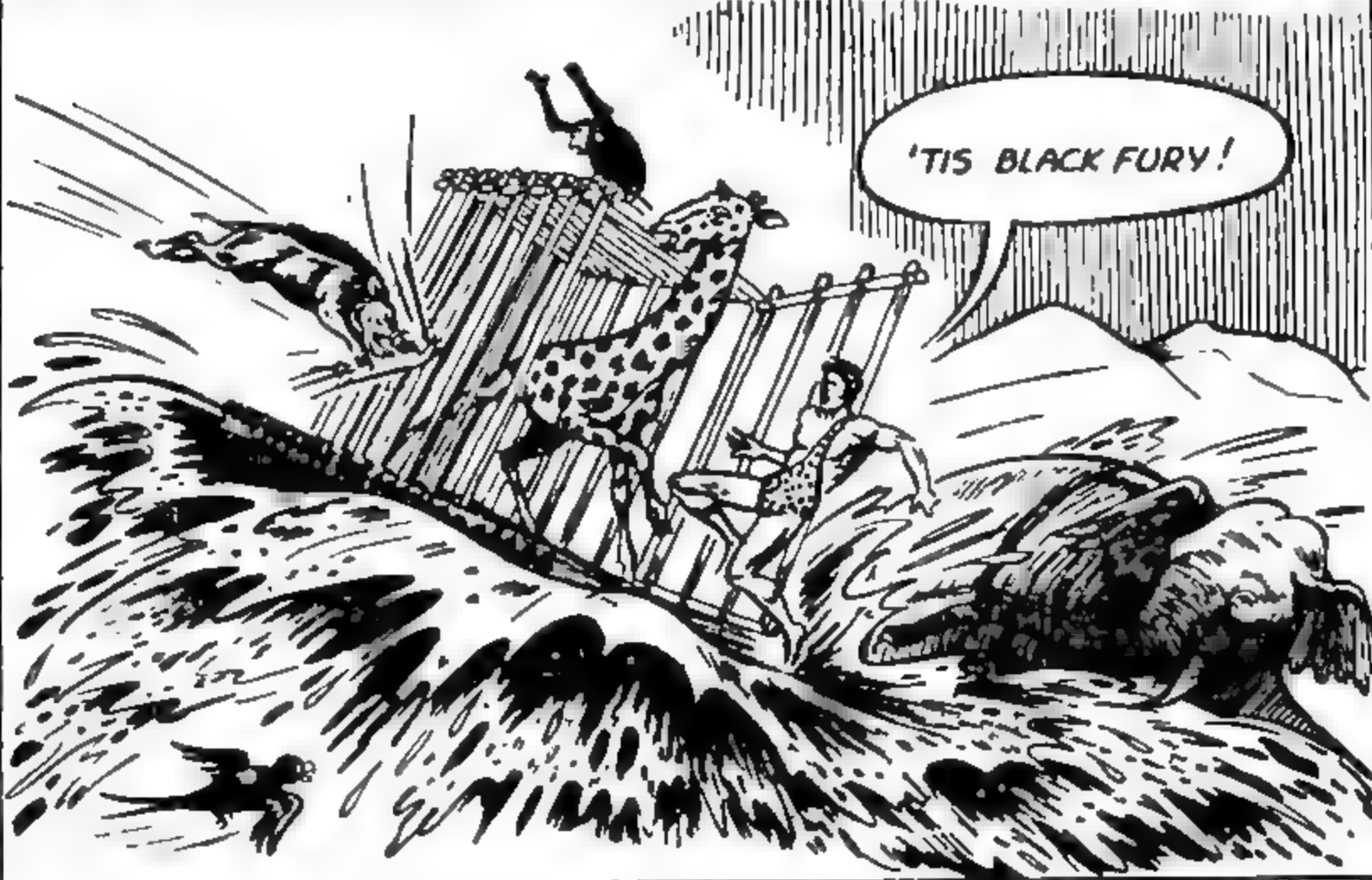
WE'RE SAFE! WE'VE BEATEN THEM! WE CAN NOW CROSS TO THE OTHER SIDE AND RETURN LITTLE LONGNECK TO HIS TRIBE



BUT BLACK FURY, THE KING OF THE BOARS, WAS SEETHING WITH FURY. AFTER ONLY A MOMENT'S PAUSE THE SAVAGE BEAST TOOK OFF IN A TREMENDOUS LEAP!



JEF WAS THROWN OFF-BALANCE AS THE MIGHTY BOAR CRASHED ON TO THE RAFT, CAUSING THE CAGE DOOR TO BURST OPEN



STRICKEN WITH TERROR, THE YOUNG GIRAFFE SPRANG OUT, PURSUED BY ITS RUTHLESS ENEMY



WITH MUSCLES RIPPING, THE DAUNTLESS JUNGLE LAD FLUNG HIMSELF FORWARD



ONE TREMENDOUS HEAVE SENT BLACK FURY CRASHING INTO THE OPEN CAGE



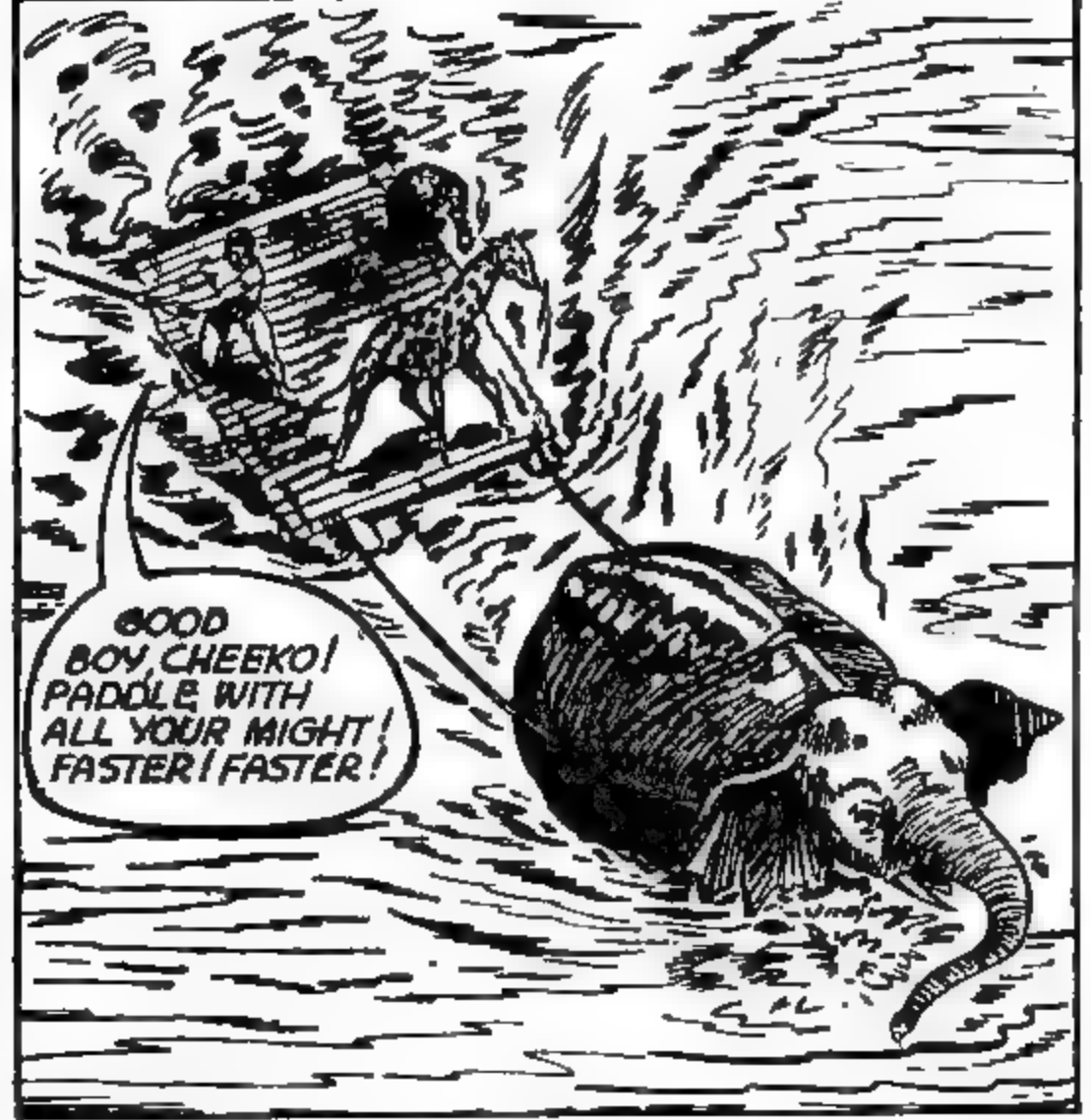
CUTTING LOOSE THE CAGE FROM THE RAFT, JEF PUSHED IT OVERBOARD



THE BAFFLED BOAR WAS WASHED UP ON TO THE BANK



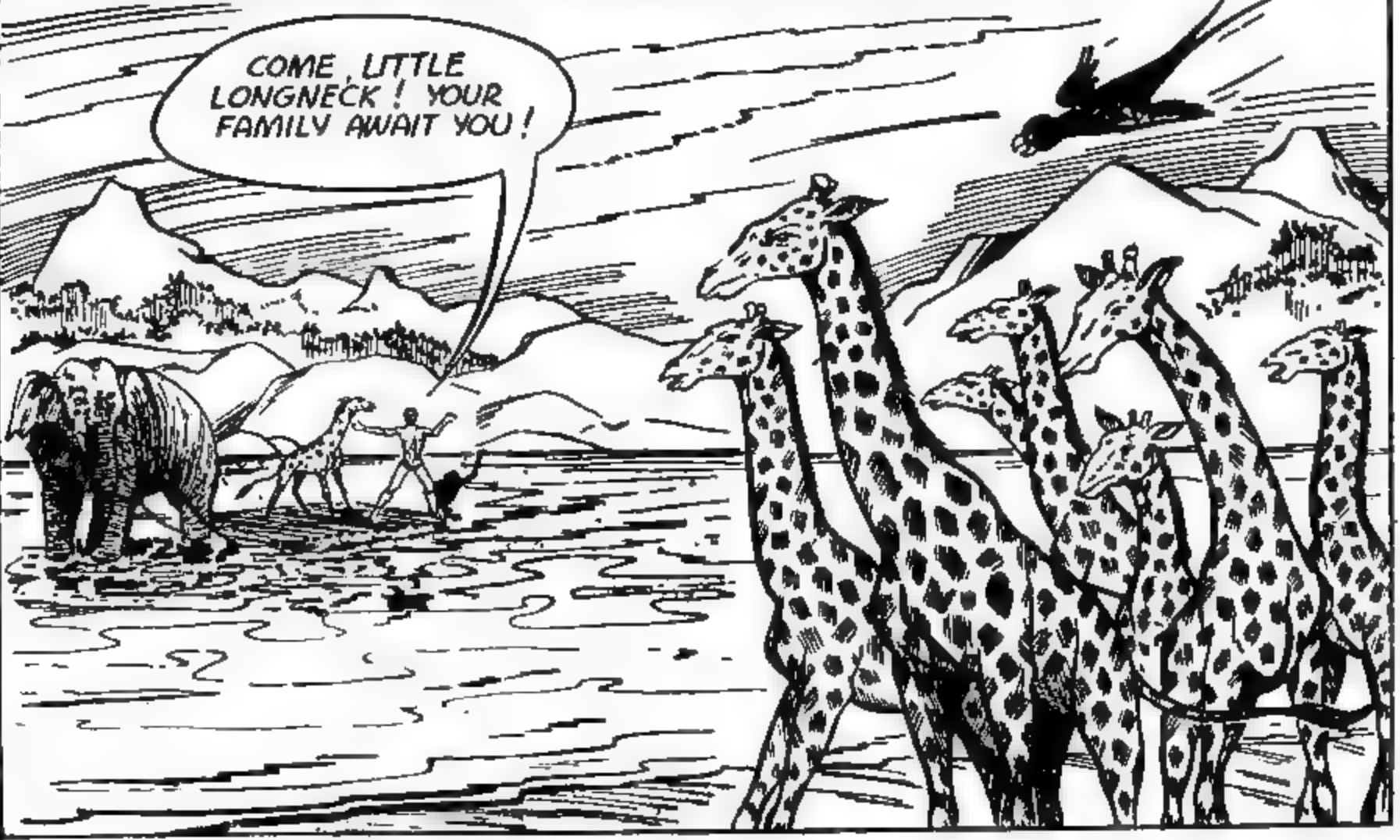
JEF GAZED TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE LAKE - THEN
UTTERED A GASP



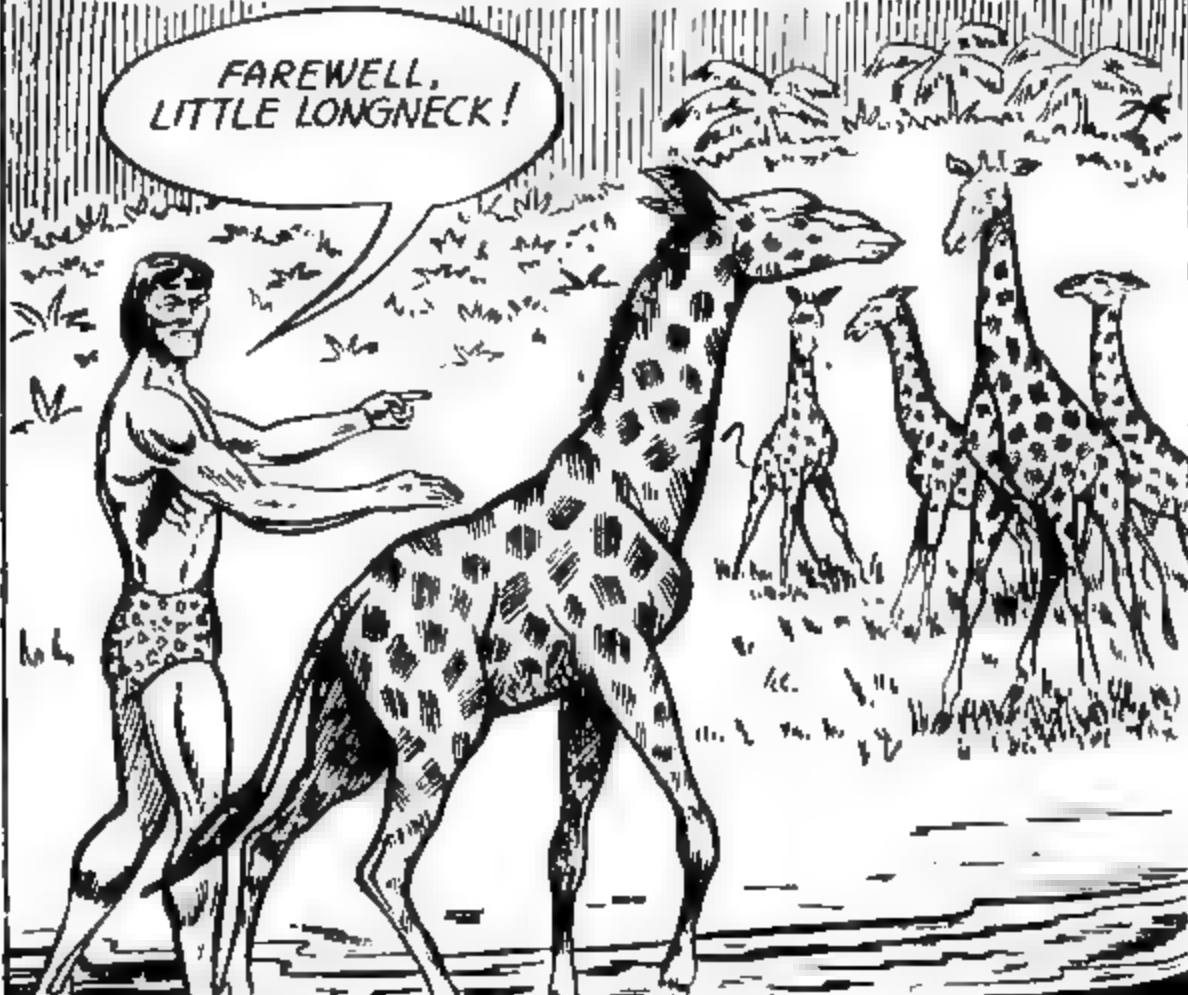
AS THEY NEARED THE SHORE,
BOKO FLEW ON AHEAD AND
CIRCLED ABOVE THE HERD



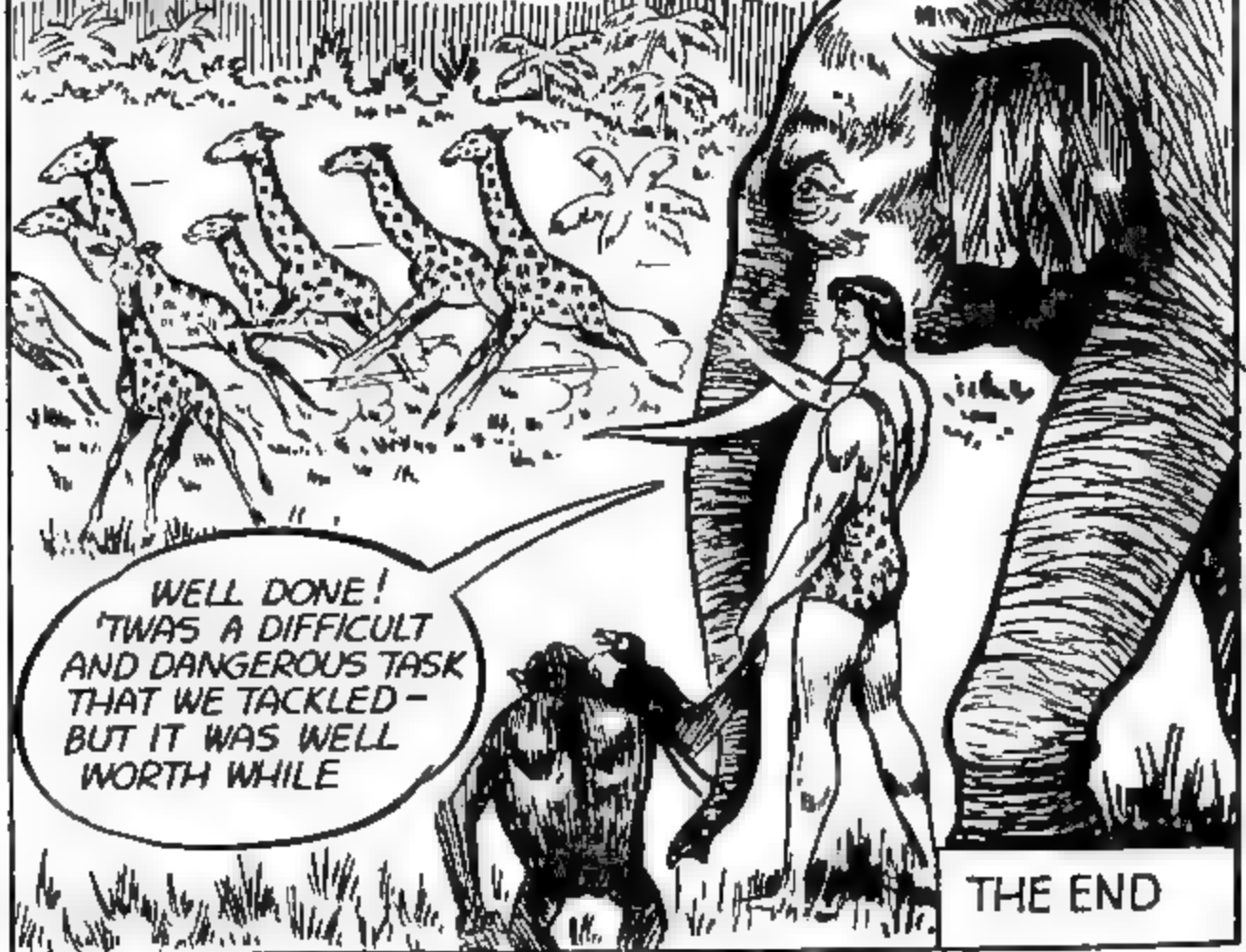
AT BOKO'S SCREECHING CALL, THE GIRAFFES PAUSED AND TURNED



AND WITH A FRIENDLY PAT, JEF SENT THE YOUNG
GIRAFFE TROTTING TO THE HERD, WHERE IT WAS
JOYFULLY RECOGNISED AND GREETED



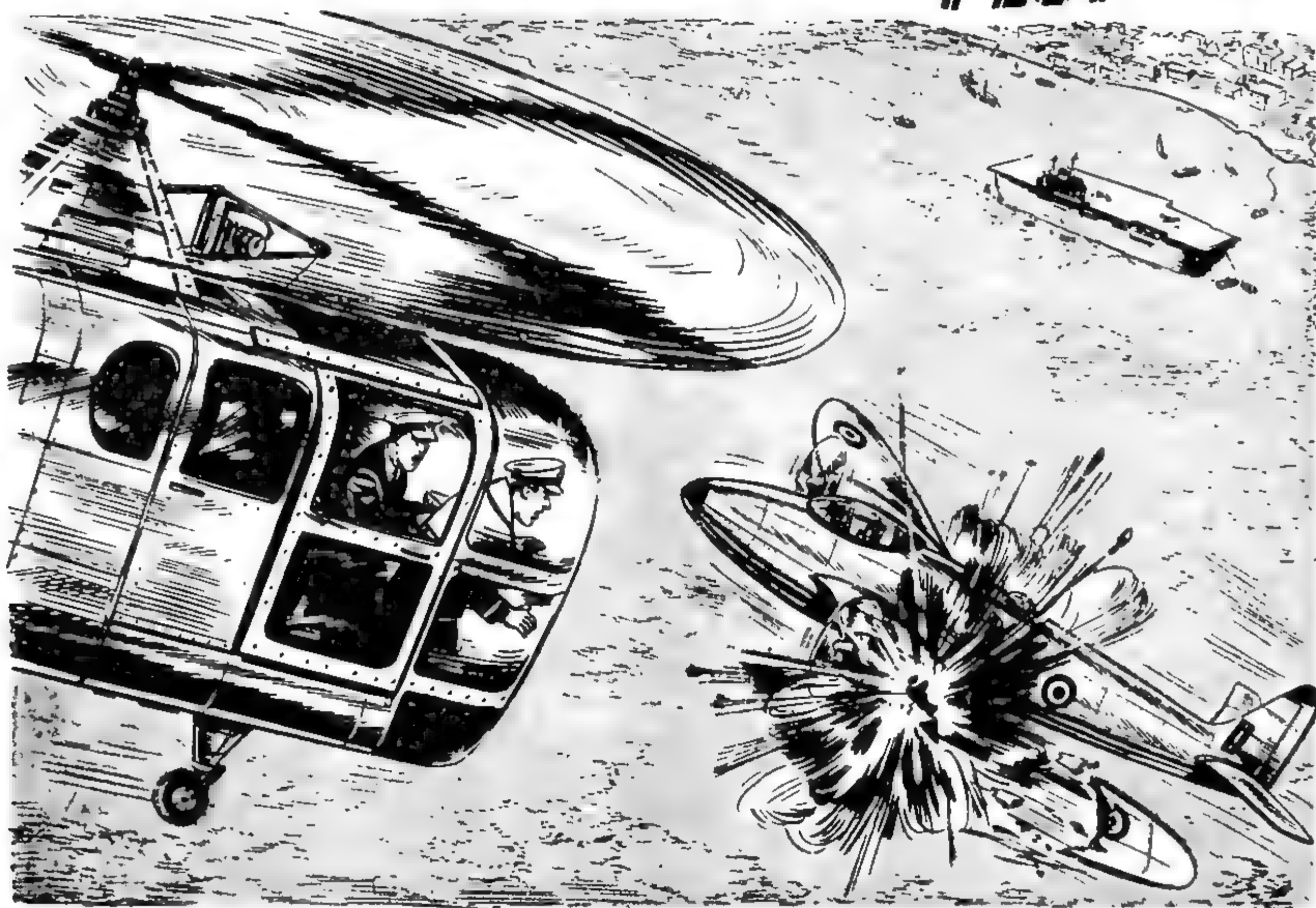
AS THE GIRAFFE HERD MOVED AWAY INTO THE JUNGLE,
JEF CONGRATULATED HIS
FAITHFUL COMPANIONS



THE END

The GREAT PLANE-WRECKING PLOT

BY
PETER
WILLIAMS



THE "BLACK EYE" CLUE

TREACHEROUS-LOOKING bunch and no mistake—eh, Wallaby?"

The speaker was a suntanned young man in the uniform of a Lieutenant in the Fleet Air Arm. His name was Steve Brent and his voice was pitched low, as he leaned on the small café table, and spoke to his Aussie pal, Sub-Lieutenant Wallaby Wilkins.

"You said it, cobber," growled Wallaby. His keen gaze took in the other occupants of the crowded Arab café. "I wouldn't trust this pack of Oriental bushrangers farther than I could throw 'em!"

The two pals were helicopter pilots aboard the Royal Navy aircraft carrier "Triumphant." At present the carrier was on a goodwill visit to the Middle East port of El Aminia.

The pals had good reason to be suspicious. El Aminia harboured many agents hostile to Britain, and recently there had been a series of unsolved acts

of sabotage to British ships putting into the port. All ranks aboard the carrier had been ordered to keep a weather eye open for signs of trouble.

On the following day parties of sightseers, mainly made up of local officials, influential merchants and other big-wigs, were to be allowed to look over the ship. Steve and Wallaby had come ashore to deliver two tickets for the function to an old sheik and his son.

The Arabs, however, had been away in the desert—and after a fruitless search the pals had set off to return to the ship. It was just as darkness was beginning to fall that they had decided to drop into the small Arab café for a drink.

The robed and bearded occupants of the place had apparently taken little notice of the fliers' entry. But as he sipped his tiny cup of fragrant coffee, Steve felt that somebody was watching them.

So far nothing unusual had happened, and now Steve looked at his watch.

At Grips with the Menace of Saboteurs Aboard a British Aircraft Carrier

"Oh well, me old flying fish," he said to Wallaby. "It's time we were getting back to that floating hornets' nest of ours!"

Rising from his chair, Steve felt for his wallet. But as he pulled it out, the leather slipped through his fingers, fell to the floor and flipped open. He bent to pick it up.

Before he could do so, a plump, brown hand with short, stubby fingers forestalled him!

"Allow me, effendi," came an oily voice. "It is not often Ferradji's humble café has the honour of entertaining such important guests!"

Straightening, Steve found himself staring into the face of a squatly-built Arab in a crumpled European suit. The man was proffering the wallet, and smiling broadly.

"Thanks a lot," grinned Steve, taking it from him. "I was just about to pay the bill."

"Ah, think nothing of it, my friend. I, Ferradji, want no payment," cried the café owner, spreading his hands. "For the pleasure of such company I would willingly give twenty cups of coffee."

In vain Steve pressed him to take the money. The man just refused point blank. Laughing silkily, he bowed the pals to the door and bade them good-night.

Outside in the darkened street, Wallaby grinned at his shipmate.

"Looks like we were wrong about those characters," he said. "At any rate old Ferradji seemed a reasonable sort of bloke!"

Steve made no reply. He was not so sure. There had been something about the squat Ferradji's manner which had disturbed him. The man had been a shade too anxious to please, and Steve was sure he had been keeping watch on him and Wallaby.

Steve shrugged. "Still—perhaps I'm wrong," he thought.

Nevertheless, Steve would have been even less confident had he seen the three stealthy figures which, at that moment, were slipping from the café entrance behind them. Little did he know that danger was treading so closely on his heels!

The first Steve knew of the followers was a sudden movement in the shadows to his right. Next second, dark figures leapt towards him.

"Look out, pal," Steve yelled. "It's an ambush."

Then he swung a full-bodied right hook to meet the attackers. It crunched home on solid flesh and Steve heard a gasp of pain. Before he could follow up, however, a cosh exploded against the side of his skull, spinning him to one side.

A violent red mist surged for a second before Steve's eyes. Then he blacked out! He was aware of a sickening, falling sensation—then nothing.

Steve came round to find he was lying on the cold cobbles. Clawing himself to his feet he looked round, and saw with relief that Wallaby too was

rising groggily from the ground. Of their attackers there was no sign!

The two fought to shake off the effects of the violent cosh attack. Then——

Suddenly Steve realised that the front of his tunic was gaping open. He ran his hands over it—and gasped with dismay.

"My wallet—it's been stolen," he blurted. "It's gone——"

"It's not gone far, cobber," broke in the Aussie pilot grimly. "Look!"

Bending, he lifted something from the cobbles. Taking it, Steve saw it was his wallet. His grim expression, as he thumbed through it, changed to one of amazement.

"Well if that doesn't beat everything," he cried. "Nothing has been stolen—except the two tickets for tomorrow's shindig aboard 'Triumphant.'"

"But who in heck can want to get aboard the carrier so badly?" demanded Wallaby, with a puzzled frown. "And how did they know you were carrying the tickets anyway?"

Steve shook his head slowly. The same questions were racing through his own mind. But he could find no answer to them.

"Whoever the attackers were, and whatever their motives, one of them will sure have a shiner tomorrow," he observed slowly, remembering the single blow he had been able to land in the treacherous attack.

Steve was still puzzling over the whole affair when the pals arrived back at the ship. The following day he would have to report the matter. Then strict watch would have to be kept for any likely gate-crashers, although the chances of picking them out of the throng of visiting Arabs would be small. Even so, Steve was grimly determined to repay the treachery at all costs!

The next morning the young pilot found bright sunlight streaming into the trim, grey-painted cabin. Immediately the happenings of the previous evening flooded back into his mind. He leapt from the bunk and roused Wallaby.

The pals dressed rapidly, and made their way on deck. But just as they were on their way to the captain's cabin, a sudden hubbub of Arab voices caused Steve to spin round. It was the first party of sightseers being shown over the ship. They were just returning from the flight deck.

But Steve's eyes abruptly narrowed with suspicion. He gripped the startled Wallaby by the arm!

"Do you see what I see, chum? Look at that character with the sticking plaster over his eye! Recognise him?"

Steve was pointing towards a small, fat man. Over the newcomer's left eye was a piece of sticking plaster, which barely covered the dark discolouration of—a black eye! Wallaby let out a low whistle

"Phew—it's that character, Ferradji," he blurted. "Where the dickens did a guy like that get hold of a ticket?"

Steve snorted with indignation.

"He got it the same place he got that shiner, pal—from us!" rapped Steve, a sudden glint of understanding in his eye. "He must have seen the tickets I had when I dropped my wallet at his café yesterday!"

"It was Ferradji and a couple of his pals who jumped us after we left the café," he rapped. "C'mon, Wallaby. We're going to find out what his little game is—once and for all!"

SHARK PERIL!

EVEN as Steve strode forward, a voice booming over the carrier's loudspeaker system brought him up short.

"Calling aircrew, Heron 1—report to the flight deck immediately!" blared the speakers. "The flying display is about to begin!"

The pals groaned aloud. The call was for them. One of the carrier's attack planes was to perform aerobatics for the benefit of the visitors. While any flying was going on, it was the pals' job to stand-by in their helicopter, ready to go to the rescue in the case of a crash.

There was nothing for it but to leave the unmasking of Ferradji until later. With a last, reluctant glance at the treacherous Arab, the pals raced towards their machine!

No sooner were they seated in the small cabin than a voice crackled over the headphones. It was the take-off order!

With a wave to the ground crew, Steve opened the throttle of the idling engine. Instantly the giant rotor above the pals leapt into life. It whirled with increasing speed, just a dark blur in the morning sunlight.

Then, as the clattering engine reached a crescendo, the helicopter rose from the flight deck, and clawed its way into the sky. From the corner of his eye, Steve noticed the small cluster of sightseers receding below. In their midst was the squat figure of Ferradji.

But Steve had no time to think about the cunning Arab now. As the helicopter took up its station, he could see the slim shape of the twin-engined demonstration plane, revving up on the flight deck.

"There she goes," chimed in the Aussie beside him. "She's leaving the deck like a jet-propelled jackrabbit!"

Wallaby was right. The aircraft was flashing along the flight deck—already the nose wheel was lifting. A split second later the plane was out over the bows, flying straight and level, scudding like a great silver bird across the rolling sea!

"That's old Jock Adams at the controls," grinned

Steve admiringly. "He's just the boy to give those big-wigs a show to remember. He's climbing now—he'll——"

Whoooooomph!

Steve got no further. His words were lost in a shattering explosion, and a cry of alarm from Wallaby. One wing of the plane below them had disintegrated in a mighty sheet of flame!

A split-instant later the stricken plane slewed into a crazy spin. Twice it cartwheeled. Then, before the horrified eyes of the watching pals, it hit the water in a gigantic spout of spray.

At once the automatic marker-flare sent out a plume of green smoke.

Without a second's hesitation, Steve sent the helicopter screaming down. He knew that the surrounding sea was teeming with ferocious sharks, and every second counted if the hapless fliers were to be saved.

Rapidly, Wallaby paid out the rescue line. But a glance at the scene below made him yell with horror!

Steve followed Wallaby's pointing finger, and gulped. The two fliers had climbed safely from the wreck, and already one of them had taken to the water. But streaking towards him was the most dreaded danger signal of the whole seven seas—the black dorsal fin of a monster shark!

Now the helicopter was over the ditched fliers. Aghast, Wallaby saw the greenish-white flash of the shark's belly skin, as it rolled on its side to take the hapless victim. The razor-toothed jaws were gaping!

Then abruptly a hard staccato sound cracked across the noise of the 'copter's engine! spurts of foam flecked the water around the great tiger of the deep. All at once the fish was leaping from the water in a wild, threshing frenzy!

Wallaby glanced across the machine's rocking cabin. His amazed stare turned to a grin of admiration!

With one hand Steve was holding the stick steady. In the other he held the service revolver he had grabbed in the nick of time. Smoke still curled from the muzzle of the weapon with which he had pumped shot after shot into the shark.

Steve's aerial sharp-shooting had saved the lives of the defenceless pilots below.

Minutes later the dripping pair were winched up into the safety of the 'copter. Then the machine whirled its way back to the anchored "Triumphant."

For the next quarter-hour excitement mounted high aboard the carrier. Determined to discover the cause of the amazing crash, the commander had dispatched a launch to tow the waterlogged wreck in.

With infinite care, this was accomplished. As soon as the launch bumped alongside, a cable was

attached to the battered fuselage, and it was swung inboard.

Immediately, technical officers crowded around the wreck, probing the battered airframe. But it was Steve, who having landed the survivors, made the astounding discovery!

Running his fingers around the inside of the wrecked engine's battered cowl, he suddenly stiffened. Something sharp had met his touch—but it was not metal!

For a second he tugged at the mysterious object. Then he had pulled it free. Frowning grimly, he walked over to the watching commander, and held out his hand!

There in Steve's palm was—a jagged, blackened piece of glass!

"Great guns," bellowed the commander. "Glass in the engine of one of our kites. This means only one thing—sabotage!"

"Too true, sir," nodded Steve. He scraped at a dark substance crusted on the glass. "And I'll bet this is the remains of some sort of explosive, too. It's a cert somebody slipped a bottle of the stuff into the kite's air intake, and when the engine heated up, the stuff went sky-high!"

"By the stars—a saboteur aboard my ship!" roared the commander. "We'll lay him by the heels!"

But a sudden glint had leapt into Steve's eyes.

"You bet we will, sir!" he exclaimed. "Wilkins and I know his hideout—and his identity!"

The announcement was like a bombshell.

In amazement the C.O. listened, as Steve recounted the happenings of the previous night.

"You're right, Brent!" gasped the commander, when Steve finished. "This Ferradji character is the only one it could have been. He went round the flight deck with the rest of the party. And that's when he planted the bomb!"

The C.O. punched one fist into the palm of the other.

"But we're still scuppered," he cried in anguish. "I packed those infernal sightseers ashore, as soon as the crash happened. Ferradji will have got clean away!"

Steve shook his head.

"Don't forget we know the rat's hideout, sir!" he urged. "Give us permission to go ashore and we'll bring him in—or bust!"

Without a second's hesitation, the carrier commander gave the pals permission. And in double quick-time they were speeding shorewards in a powerful launch.

As the boat arrowed through the sun-sparkling blue water, Steve's mouth was a grim line. But in his eyes danced a gleam of excitement.



As Steve sent the helicopter diving towards the launch, the fleeing Arabs viciously opened fire. At all cost they were determined to avoid capture.

While the oily saboteur and his hirelings were still at large, they would be a danger to the Royal Navy's ships anchoring off El Aminia. The ships' future safety depended on whether or not the pals could put the saboteurs behind bars!

Silently, Steve vowed that he would bring Ferradji to justice—and repay the slippery thug's treachery!

Running the launch alongside the teeming native jetty, the pals tied up and leapt ashore. Brushing aside the native vendors, who crowded round at the sight of the Naval uniforms, the two raced through the crowded streets.

Without hesitation Steve led the way to the dusty alley which contained Ferradji's down-at-heel café.

But a shock awaited the pair as they slithered to a halt outside the low, stone building. The café was deserted. The doors and windows were blocked by heavy, nailed boards!

"They've scarpered," groaned Wallaby. "Ferradji and his mob have got clean away! We'll never catch 'em now!"

SKY-FISHING FOR SABOTEURS

STEVE shook his head.

"Quick—round to the back," he gasped. "If we can force a way in, we may find a clue as to where they've gone."

It was the work of a moment for the pals to dash along the narrow alley flanking Ferradji's silent café. They reached an open space at the back.

Facing them, in the rear wall of the café, was another door. As one man they hurtled at it.

The impact was too much for the rickety door, as their shoulders hit the wood. With a splintering crack, it burst inwards, spinning from its hinges.

Breathing heavily, the pals pulled up short!

They were standing in a dark corridor, which obviously led to the bar at the front of the café. But on either side, doors opened off the corridor. It was upon these that Steve's gaze was fixed.

"Okay, let's search these rooms," he rapped. "We'll start with that one over there. Keep your eyes peeled for clues. We've got to discover where Ferradji and his mob have disappeared to!"

Already Wallaby was bursting into the nearest room, and Steve followed him.

But even as he darted into the bare room, Steve knew he had made a bad mistake. From the corner of his eye he glimpsed shadowy figures slipping from another doorway in the corridor!

Too late he whirled!

From outside the stout door was crashed shut. A key turned noisily in the lock. Steve threw himself against the door—in vain. It was fast shut!

A mocking voice reached Steve from outside—Ferradji's voice.

"You impetuous young fools," taunted the Arab.

"You have meddled once too often and now you will pay for your stupidity!"

"Stow the talk, you oily rat," broke in Steve. "You're pretty good at attacking from behind, or leaving you fiendish bombs on an unguarded aircraft. But you haven't the grit to face a fair fight!"

There came a snarl of rage from behind the door.

"You will pay with your life for those words, you fool," mouthed the hidden Arab. "You will perish here, while I and my men escape in a launch I have prepared. We will make our new base at El Mafik along the coast! And strike at the British from there!"

Blankly the pals stared at each other. What had Ferradji cooked up? What had he got in store for them?

The pals were soon to find out! Suddenly Steve drew a sharp breath. He sniffed hard.

"Smoke!" he gasped.

Steve was pointing to the gap below the door. Thick, oily smoke was curling through the gap. And even as the pals watched, they could hear the crackle of burning wood. Ferradji and his thugs had set the café afire!

Steve gritted his teeth and glanced rapidly round the bare room which held them prisoner. Were they to die like rats in a trap—while Ferradji lived to threaten the safety of countless British lads?

The room was windowless and already the temperature inside was rising steeply. The air was becoming thick with smoke. Steve knew that the pair of them could not withstand the acrid fumes and stifling heat for very long.

Grimly he examined the room again. The walls were of massive, rough-hewn blocks of stone, welded together by heavy cement hardened by the passage of time. There was no chance of breaking a way through this.

The floor was of the same materials, and by the sound of their footsteps Steve could tell that solid packed earth lay below the stones.

Then for the first time, the young pilot shot a glance at the ceiling. He felt a sudden wave of hope. This was the one weak spot of their suffocating cell.

The building was roofed with heavy boards. But near one wall there was a board, cracked and rotten with age.

By now the room was full of smoke and the heat was almost unbearable. Seeking to clear his watering eyes, Steve leaned across to Wallaby and shouted rapid instructions over the deafening roar of the flames.

Wallaby understood. Quickly he stooped and Steve clambered astride his shoulders. Then the Aussie straightened, lifting his pal up towards the roof.

Desperately Steve thrust his strong fingers into a

crevice beside the cracked board. Then he exerted every particle of strength he could muster.

For a second his muscles strained. Beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. Then, as he exerted almost superhuman strength on the stubborn wood—there came a splintering crack.

With a choking gasp of delight, Steve pulled away a great piece of the boarding. He could see the sky—through a hole big enough for the pals to climb out!

In next to no time they had done so, and were dragging in great mouthfuls of clean air in the alley beside the guttering café.

"Ferradji will be well on the way to El Mafik by now," rapped Steve, as they regained strength. "It's a big town and we'd never track them down there! There's only one way we can catch up with them—in the 'copter. C'mon! Let's get back to the ship."

A breakneck dash to the jetty, and the pals were aboard their launch. Out towards the long, grey shape of the "Triumphant" they roared, the effects of the fire forgotten in the stinging dash of salty spray!

Once aboard the carrier, the daring pair made for their refuelled helicopter. Switching on the radio, Steve blurted an explanation to the flying control officer. Then he started the motor.

Once again the great rotor blurred into action. Like a rocket the 'copter zoomed from the deck. Then—"There they are!"

Wallaby's sudden cry sent a thrill of anticipation through Steve. Wallaby was pointing to a small speck in the sea beyond a barren, rocky headland. It was within half a mile of El Mafik.

"You're right, you old son of a gun," Steve cried, levelling the binoculars which Wallaby had passed to him. "There are three of 'em in the boat and I can see Ferradji as clear as day. Now we'll settle their hash!"

Steve opened the throttle as wide as it would go. Then he thrust the stick forward in a perfectly-judged dive.

Down towards the launch swooped the whirlwind, flying egg-beater. Suddenly a stab of flame leapt from the fleeing boat. With shattering impact a hole was smashed in the cockpit window. A bullet zipped by—an inch from Steve's head!

"It's now or never, Wallaby," rapped Steve. "Fix a heavy grapnel to the end of the rescue line and lower away. I'm going to give that cowardly bunch the surprise of their lives."

A hail of lead was whining around the little 'copter, as it hurtled even lower. But, cool as a cucumber, Wallaby carried out his orders.

Seconds before the aircraft passed over the launch, the heavy grapnel swept downwards. Almost at once there was a momentary check in the progress of the helicopter. A whoop of triumph burst from Wallaby as he craned to look below.

With perfect judgment, Steve had sent the spinning grapnel whipping across the steering well of the launch. Next second the device had hooked into the steering wheel of the boat—and wrenched it off as the 'copter tore on its way.

With the steering controls carried away, the saboteur gang was powerless to stop the launch as it careered off in a crazy circle. Panic-stricken at the sudden turn of events, Ferradji and his men leapt into the sea. In their fright they were heedless of the danger of sharks. They meant to swim ashore to El Mafik, and make good their escape.

"Righto, pal," roared Steve. "Winch in the line and bend the scoop net to it. We're going to have some extra passengers."

Down went the net. Clipping the tops of the sluggish waves it streaked towards the floundering conspirators. With a deft flick of the controls, Steve sent the net dipping under the swimmers. Then they were scooped from the water and were lifted, struggling, into the air.

Sliding back the door of the cockpit, Steve yelled a warning to the terrified trio below.

"Better behave yourself, Ferradji," he called. "One false move and we might have to tip you out. Don't forget, it's a long way down!"

The saboteurs were routed completely—and they knew it. From then on, it was the work of a few minutes to take them back to the ship, and hand them over to an armed guard of British blue-jackets.

But there was one more surprise in store for Steve and Wallaby. This time a pleasant one.

It was shortly after the pals had handed in their flight reports that they received a summons to the commander's cabin.

When they entered the cabin, he strode across and shook them warmly by the hand!

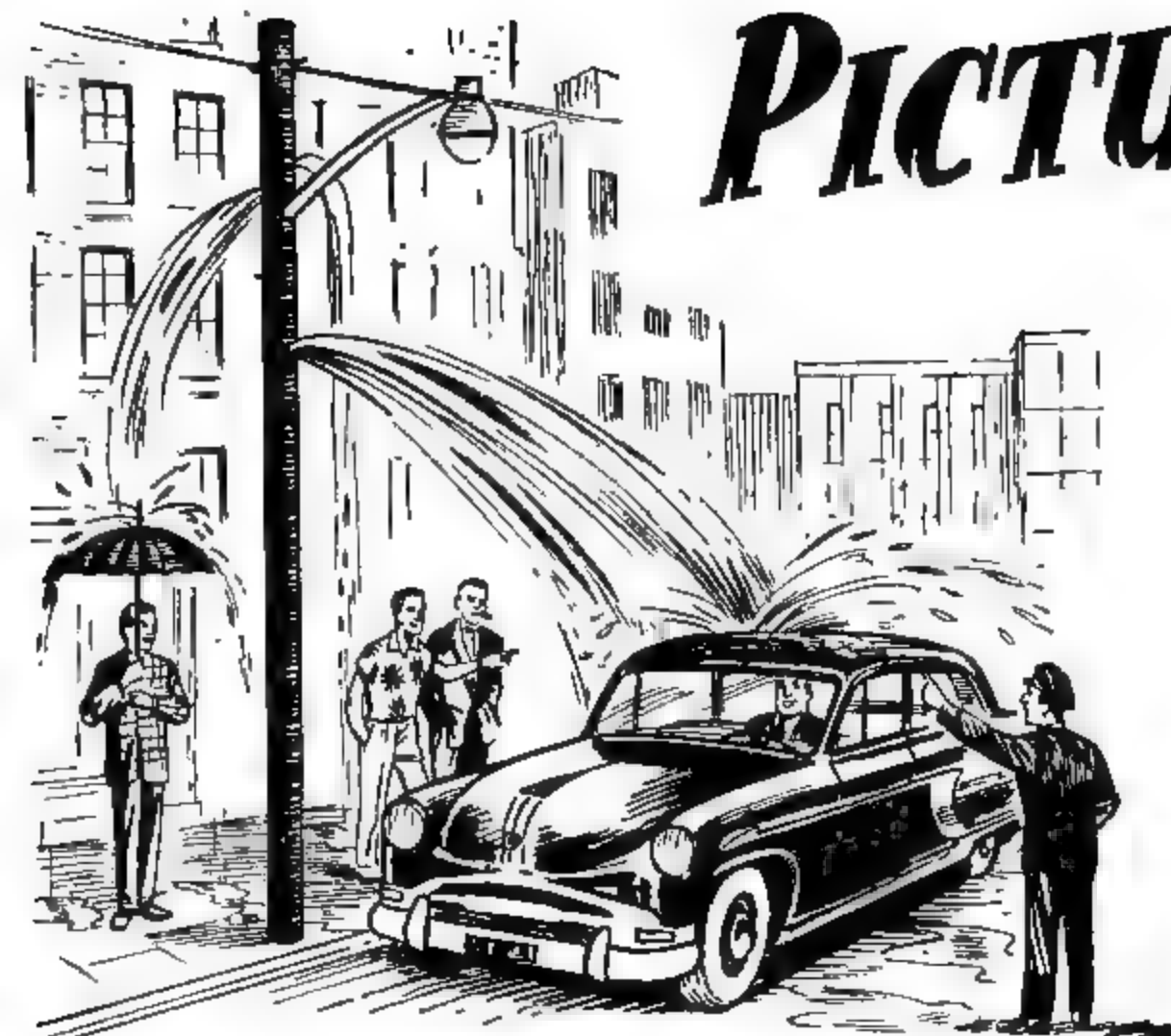
"Congratulations, you two," he beamed. "Thanks to you, a dangerous gang of saboteurs and their leader, Ferradji, are safely behind bars. You've done the Royal Navy's reputation out here a power of good! We're proud of you both!"

Steve grinned with delight, and turned to his pal.

"Well, I guess that makes us more than even with Ferradji, eh Wallaby?"

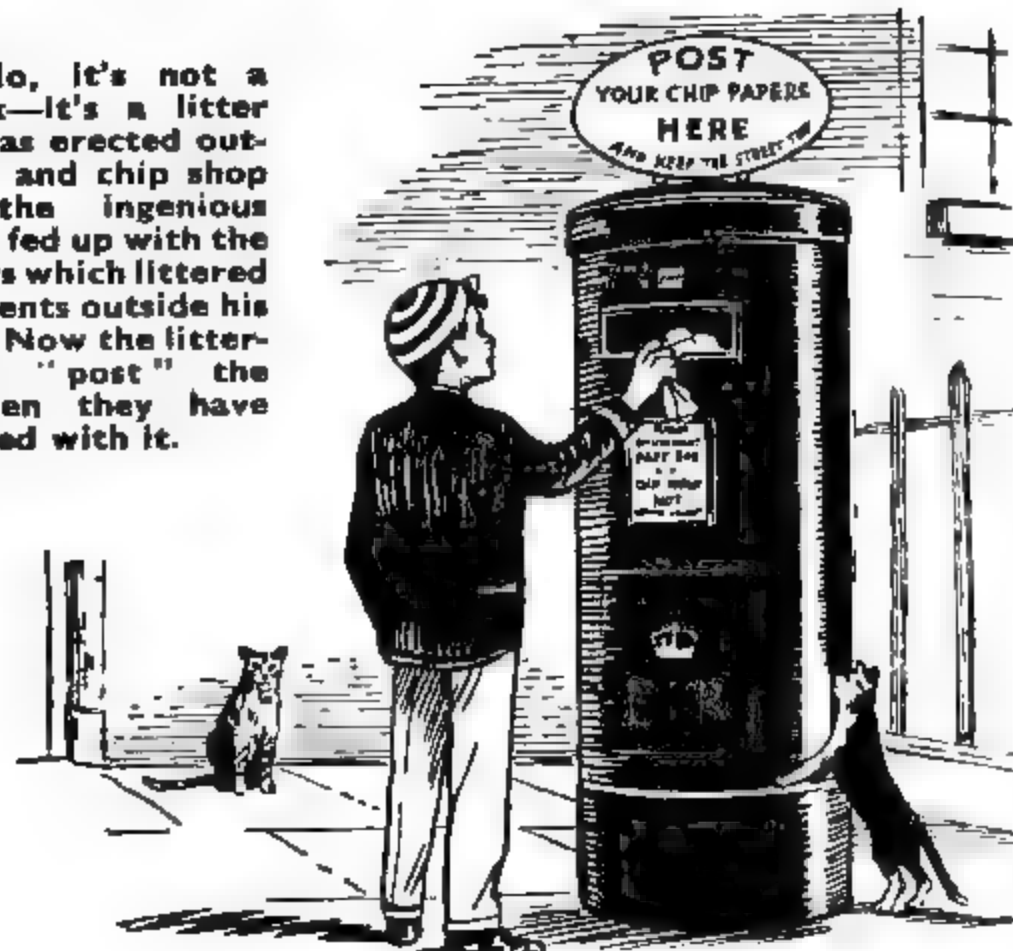
"Yeah," drawled the Aussie reflectively. "But somehow I'm a little sorry it's all over. It made life real exciting!"

PICTURE PARADE of



Cars received a free cleaning in Pittsburgh, U.S.A. A burst water-main beneath the pavement forced water up the inside of a street lamp standard, until it gushed out of joints in the metal. For a change the lamp gave water instead of light.

(Right)—No, it's not a letter box—it's a litter box! It was erected outside a fish and chip shop because the ingenious owner was fed up with the used papers which littered the pavements outside his premises. Now the litter-louts can "post" the paper when they have finished with it.



You've heard of penny post—but it's a good bet that this is the first time you've seen one. It was an idea dreamed up by the generous customers of an American restaurant. Over a period of months they knocked cents into the post, until it finally became covered with coins. They then gave the money to charity.



Meet one lorry driver who's really in a hole. He was driving along a London road when the ground suddenly caved in under his rear wheels. The lorry promptly slipped backwards into the cavity, and it took a heavy crane to pull it out again.



The cheapest egg ever was bought by a 70-year-old Ryde man. True, it cost him a few pennies—but when he sat down to eat it, he found a shining shilling inside. No one knows how it got there, but he's keeping it for luck!

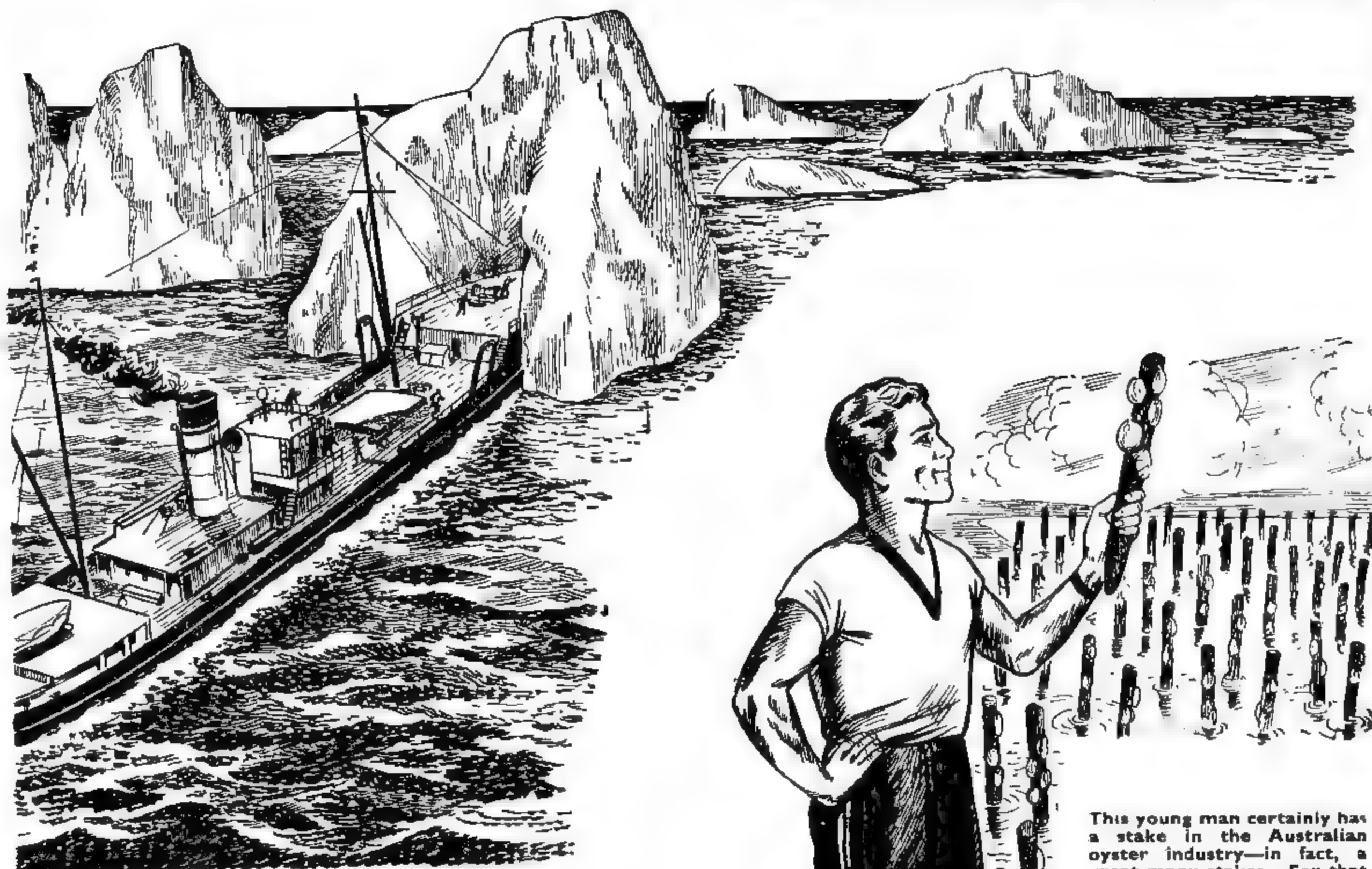
FACTS FROM NEAR AND FAR



The Japanese are top-notch at mass-production. Now they've turned their attention to golf! At Lusaka, L-golfers can drive off as many balls as they like, without the fag of collecting them afterwards. This chore is done for them by the caged caddies you see above!



It's a four-ton car—but that is nothing but a paper-thin plastic bag holding it up. The plastic is one of the toughest materials in the world, and is used to wrap anything from pills to pantech-nicons. That's one problem that industry have right in the bag.



It's usual to pack a trawler's catch in ice, but take a look at this craft! She's on ice herself. It happened in thick fog. The trawler rammed an iceberg, and the bows became wedged in a deep cleft. For two days she was forced to drift with this natural dry-dock before the crew were able to get her off.

This young man certainly has a stake in the Australian oyster industry—in fact, a great many stakes. For that is how the young oysters are cared for. The stakes are driven into the sea bed and smeared with thick tar. The young oysters stick in this and thrive!

The Witch Doctor of TALOOFA

BY
HENRY
GAYLIN



THIEVES IN THE MOONLIGHT

TOM THOMPSON, District Commissioner of an island near the Fiji group in the hot South Seas, leaned forward, elbows on knees, and peered ahead through the windscreen of his jeep as it bounced and roared along the narrow jungle track. The headlights slashed the darkness with beams of silver light which picked out every detail of the trail.

Weary after a hard day's duty in the tropic heat, Tom wasn't sorry that Kalongo, his native servant, was pushing ahead so fast, and he glanced up with a frown of annoyance as the jeep skidded to a halt at a fork in the jungle road.

"You want to get on home tonight, Boss sir?" Kalongo asked, his teeth flashing whitely in the gloom. "Taloofa Trading Post not far from here—Boss Baker be glad to see you, we stop the night there and go on tomorrow!"

Tom hesitated, thinking of his own neat bungalow and comparing it with the untidy but cheerful quarters at the Trading Post. He liked the company

of Johnny Baker, the Australian trader at the Post, but there was a lot of desk work to catch up on back at his office.

He was about to order Kalongo to drive on for home when he heard a sudden chorus of yells and howls, swiftly followed by the sound of rifle fire!

"Looks like my mind's been made up for me, Kalongo!" Tom said curtly. "We'll go to the Trading Post—and fast!"

The engine roared and the jeep lurched forward, dust spurring from the wheels. They were only half a mile from the Post and it wasn't long before the lights of its buildings loomed up through the trees. Flashes which stabbed the darkness of the bungalow's verandah showed where the rifle fire was coming from, and Tom muttered angrily to himself.

"What the blazes does Johnny think he's doing?" he gritted between clenched teeth. "He knows I won't allow guns to be used against the local tribes—and anyway, I don't see any signs of natives!"

The shooting stopped as the jeep approached, and Tom jumped to the ground and strode hurriedly to

Taboo Signs Barred the Way. What Lay Beyond Them? Tom Soon Found Out!

the verandah. The tall figure of Johnny Baker appeared from the shadows, his rifle resting in the crook of his arm, an expression of grim fury on his swarthy face.

"What's the big idea, Johnny?" Tom rapped, pointing to the rifle. "You're not shooting game in this light! And what was all that yelling about just now?"

"Those thieving savages from the Taloofoa Valley again, Tom!" snarled Johnny, laying his rifle on a table. "Something's got to be done about 'em—and pretty smartly too!"

Tom was astonished.

"Why, that tribe never give any trouble, Johnny!" he cried, bewildered. "They've got a wonderful part of the Island to live in, and they hate any interference from anyone—they're noted for it! You must have annoyed them!"

The big trader laughed harshly, and slumped down into a chair.

"Me annoy them—!" he rasped sarcastically. "That's rich, I will say! This is the third time this week they've been down raiding my store sheds! What am I supposed to do—look on and cheer them?"

"I can't stand for you shooting them, Johnny—you know that!" replied Tom sharply. "There must be some reason for it, and we'll have to find out what it is!"

"I wasn't shooting them—I just fired over their heads to scare 'em off!" muttered Johnny Baker sullenly. "There isn't much else I can do—I can't speak their language, and I'm darn sure I'm not going up through the jungle to that Valley of theirs! I'd be stuck full of spears and poisoned arrows before I got near the place!"

"You don't have to go up there, Johnny—that's my job!" Tom answered. "It'll be my first visit, too—I've left them to themselves up to now, seeing that they've never made any trouble before. You'd better tell me all you can about this, and we'll see what we can make of it!"

He waited while Johnny Baker got to his feet, picked up his rifle, and led the way indoors. The trader pushed aside the papers which littered the table, poured drinks for himself and his guest, and sank wearily into a chair.

"I'm short on sleep, Tom!" he grinned ruefully, stifling a yawn. "What with sitting up most nights waiting to scare these blokes off and not knowing when they're coming! I just don't get it—they got away with some stuff from the sheds the other night, and you know what they did with it? They tipped it all into the lagoon not far from here! It was all ruined and no more use to anybody!"

The Commissioner got to his feet and paced up and down the room, a worried frown on his face. He could understand the natives raiding the sheds,

and it was his job to stop such things—but why should they throw their plunder into the sea as soon as they'd got hold of it?

"Have you met any of the natives of this tribe?" he asked the trader. "They must have come down to see what you were up to when you set up this Post, surely?"

"That's the funny thing, Tom." Johnny Baker replied, "for a start everything was wonderful! Even the old Chief came along, and I gave him a portable radio which pleased him no end! I thought they'd all be down on regular visits after that, and we'd all be friendly, but he hasn't been near me again, nor any of his people!"

"You sure everyone was friendly?" asked Tom sharply. "They all seemed glad to have you around, eh?"

"Wait now—there was one old chap who turned a bit nasty!" cried Johnny, sitting up with a start. "Some sort of Witch Doctor, I'd say—the others seemed to respect him a lot! Maybe he's got it in for me—!"

THE MYSTERY SUITCASE

"I'D say there wasn't any doubt about it, Johnny!" Tom laughed shortly. "What did you do to upset him?"

"I tell you what," Johnny thumped the table with his fist excitedly, "I'll bet he was sore because he didn't get a portable radio like the Chief's! I meant him to have one, but I was short on batteries at the time and couldn't spare any more!"

"Right—now we're getting somewhere!" Tom said, and crossed to the door and called for Kalongo, who entered the room on silent feet. "Kalongo, we're stopping the night with Boss Baker and going up to the Taloofoa Valley first thing in the morning. Wake me at dawn, please!"

The native nodded and disappeared, and Tom noticed that the worried frown had vanished from Johnny Baker's face, to be replaced with a broad grin of pleasure.

"Good for you, Tom—I knew you wouldn't waste time!" the trader remarked happily, "if you want a rifle or any ammunition, I've got plenty here!"

"I don't need guns and ammunition, Johnny!" Tom smiled quietly. "I treat 'em right, and I don't often get trouble! All I want are a couple of dozen eggs, a radio set like the one you gave the Chief, and a set of spare batteries!"

The trader brought the objects and eyed Tom in bewilderment.

"What are you going to do with the eggs? Throw them at the Witch Doctor?" he gasped.

"Well, not exactly!" Tom answered mysteriously. "And now for a meal, and then I'm turning in—we've got a lot of walking and a long day ahead of us tomorrow!"

There were no more raids that night—the Taloofoa people were keeping to their village after the shooting, and as the sun rose next morning Tom and Kalongo were busily making their preparations for the journey to the Valley.

"I don't like you making this trip without a rifle, Tom!" Johnny protested indignantly. "These people might be dangerous—at least take a revolver along!"

"I've got all I need in that suitcase Kalongo's carrying," Tom replied with a grin. "And with the eggs and the radio set and the batteries, I'll manage all right!"

"Wish you'd tell me what's in it!" Johnny grunted. "You're mighty mysterious about it!"

"I'll explain when we get back," laughed Tom. "There just isn't time now! Right Kalongo—we march now!"

Tom hoped to get the journey done before the heat of the day became too great, and they were soon on the narrow jungle trail which led to the Valley. The night prowlers had vanished to their lairs, and the air was filled with the screeching of birds and the excited chattering of monkeys.

"We march for three hours, Boss sir," said Kalongo, who was carrying the mysterious suitcase. "I take you along trail not much used by tribe—then we take them by surprise, they not expect us to come that way!"

Tom nodded. Experienced as he was in the ways of Jungle travel, he could never be the equal of Kalongo, who knew the whole of the island like the palm of his hand. Until they reached the village of the Taloofoa tribe he was content to let Kalongo be his guide.

On each side of the narrow trail the jungle rose like a solid green wall. The native strode ahead of Tom, the suitcase swinging easily in his hand, his head bowed to study the ground, the quick eyes darting from one side of the track to the other. Thus they marched in silence for the next three hours.

Tom was beginning to wonder whether they would ever reach the village when Kalongo stopped, listening intently, one hand raised for silence.

"Now we are near, Boss sir!" he murmured in low tones. "Listen and hear the voices of the people!"

Tom strained his ears, turning his head this way and that. Above the noises of the jungle he fancied he heard the distant sound of chanting and occasionally a man's shout. Not for the first time was Tom glad to have Kalongo as his guide.

"Now we turn off trail, Boss sir," Kalongo whispered, pointing into the depths of the jungle to one side. "We go more slowly, but it will not be for long!"

Presently the native stopped again, puzzled.

"Only one pair of feet walk here!" he remarked. "I think this is dangerous place for us!"

TOM glanced down at the ground, but he could see nothing unusual. Only a trained tracker could spot the signs in the trail. Kalongo was watching him nervously.

"Move on!" he ordered sharply, "and let's find out for ourselves just what the danger is!"

A few yards further on they came to a sudden halt. Across the narrow trail was stretched a liana rope, tied between two trees, barring their way. All along the rope was tied a strange collection of bunches of feathers, the skulls of birds, bones and pieces of bark with weird signs burnt on them. Kalongo turned unhappily to Tom.

"These are voodoo signs, Boss sir!" he said uneasily. "It is forbidden for any man to go further! Only the Witch Doctor may pass beyond the rope!"

"I know, Kalongo—I know!" Tom had seen such warnings many times before. He knew that always the ropes of signs guarded a voodoo hut where the Witch Doctor kept his most treasured possessions, and here was a golden opportunity to find out something about the Witch Doctor of Taloofoa!

"Keep guard for me, and have no fear!" he told Kalongo. "My magic is greater by far than his—as you know very well!"

He ducked under the rope and strode on by himself. Sure enough, cleverly hidden in the dense green vegetation of the jungle, was a small reed hut with a narrow entrance. The young Commissioner squeezed inside and looked about him, blinking his eyes to accustom them to the gloom.

Grotesque carved masks, used in the tribal dances, hung grinning from the walls, and the strange costumes worn by the Witch Doctor were neatly laid out on the beaten earth of the floor. But the thing that caught Tom's attention was set on a low wooden stool, in a place of honour.

It was a small portable radio!

Grinning to himself, Tom crouched down by the set and switched it on. As he had expected, the batteries had long since run down. From a small shoulder bag he took the new ones he had brought with him from the Trading Post—it was the work of a moment to fit them into the set.

A moment later the tiny hut was filled with music—the latest dance tunes blaring out from some far-off radio station in Australia!

Tom sat back, beating time to the music with one foot, a puzzled expression on his face. The set must be the one Johnny Baker had given to the Chief—it was the only one in the Taloofoa Valley, but what was it doing in the Voodoo Hut, where no one but the Witch Doctor ever came?

A moment later the solution came to him!

"My guess is that the batteries ran down and the

set stopped working!" Tom muttered excitedly to himself. "Then the Chief ordered the Witch Doctor to get it going again, which of course he couldn't do. To save himself he stole the set and hid it here, knowing that it would never be found. He then blamed the white men for stealing the set, and they've been raiding Johnny's stores to get their own back! I'll leave it working—that ought to make the old boy feel puzzled!"

He crawled out of the hut, laughing to himself. Presently he was ducking back under the warning rope, and taking the grey-faced Kalongo by the arm.

"Come on, boy, we're off to the village!" he said. "The first visit of mine to the Taloofo people ought to be really interesting!"

Tom could see that Kalongo wasn't sorry to get away from the forbidden ground! He led the way until the trees began to thin out, and suddenly Tom found himself standing on the edge of the clearing where the village of the Taloofo tribe was built.

"See, Boss sir, how they expect our coming!" Kalongo pointed to the far side of the village. "They watch the main jungle trail which they think we will use!"

"And they don't look too friendly, either!" Tom observed. "They've got bows and arrows and throwing spears! But look, there are children

playing over there—we'll make friends with them and join them! The warriors won't like to shoot at us then in case they hit one of the children! Come on, Kalongo—!"

As Tom approached the children he shifted the shoulder bag he was carrying and fumbled inside for the eggs Johnny Baker had given him. Bit even as he did so one of the warriors turned and saw him!

THE WHITE MAGICIAN!

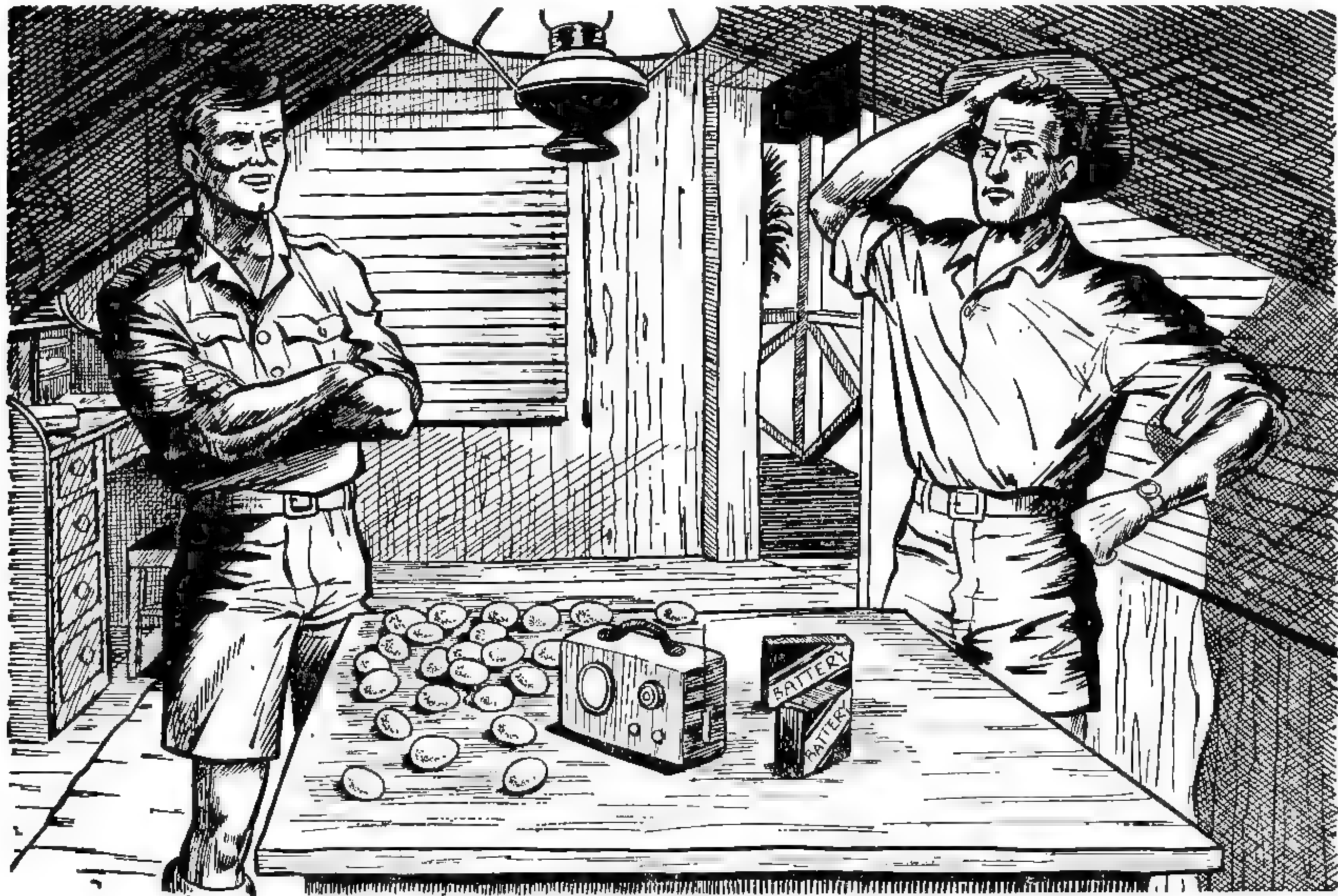
"STEADY now, Kalongo!"

Tom had noticed that the warriors had spotted them and were now advancing slowly, their spears held ready for throwing, arrows fitted to the bow strings.

The children were watching him nervously, and seemed almost ready to bolt for the safety of the huts, but a moment later they were clustering eagerly round the strange white man, while the village echoed to their shrieks of delight.

Tom was putting the eggs he had brought with him to good use. As the children watched excitedly, he gave them a magnificent display of conjuring—pulling eggs from his ears, his nose, and sometimes even from the empty air!

The warriors had stopped and were watching curiously, muttering among themselves. Suddenly



Johnny eyed Tom in bewilderment. "What are you going to do with the eggs? Throw them at the Witch Doctor?" he gasped. It seemed a queer way of tackling a mystery!

a spear hissed through the air and smacked quivering into the ground at Tom's feet.

It was a warning. Tom knew that it was a signal to him to wait for the warriors to approach.

He stooped and grasped the spear by the haft, pulling it from the ground. Peering down into the hole it had made, he reached down to fumble there with a thumb and forefinger.

A startled gasp came from the warriors as Tom rose to his feet, holding aloft an egg for all to see.

How could this white wizard produce unbroken eggs from a hole in the ground which had been made but a moment before by a needle-sharp spear?

The awed natives fell back respectfully as Tom walked forward. He had seen the Chief himself, seated upon the chair of state in the middle of the village compound, watching uneasily, and beside him stood an old and wrinkled native, wrapped in a monkey-skin cloak.

It was the Witch Doctor of Taloofa!

As Tom walked slowly towards the Chief, one hand raised as a sign of peace, he glanced back for a moment at the warriors. They were clustered round the hole in the ground, peering into it and scrabbling at the dust with their fingers to see if there were any more eggs to be found!

He sighed with relief—it would be a lot easier to talk with the Chief if the warriors were busy at

the edge of the compound, and he had a few tricks up his sleeve to keep them amused if there was any sign of trouble!

"The suitcase, Kalongo—and quick!" he rapped as he came to a halt before the Chief. "Open it up and get things ready while I speak with the Chief, and keep an eye on the warriors behind us!"

The Chief shifted uneasily on his chair, glancing nervously up at the tall Commissioner, as though he knew quite well what the visit was about. It was the Witch Doctor who spoke first, his voice rasping angrily.

"What do you want with the Taloofa people, white man?" The dark eyes glittered furiously in the wrinkled face. "We have no need of the white man's ways here in the Valley!"

Tom looked sternly down at the Chief, and took no notice of the Witch Doctor.

"O Chief—why do the Taloofa people raid and steal from the Trading Post by the lagoon?" he asked harshly. "What wrong has the Boss Baker done to you and your tribe?"

The Witch Doctor sprang to his feet with a snort of rage before the Chief could reply.

"The white man from the lagoon has stolen from us also!" he shouted, scowling at Tom. "Let him begone from the island, lest our people learn his ways!"



The warriors drew up and gazed at Tom's conjuring performance. Then one of them hurled a spear into the ground at the District Commissioner's feet. It was a grim warning!

Tom nodded thoughtfully. As he had suspected, it was the Witch Doctor who was at the bottom of the raiding, and it was plain that he had accused Johnny Baker of stealing the portable radio. A moment later the Chief himself confirmed his suspicions.

"The Boss Baker gave me a magic box which talked and sang and made music!" he said sullenly. "But soon the box became silent, and Nogoro the Witch Doctor cast a spell to make it speak again! But before the spell could work, the box was stolen in the darkness of the night! Who but the white man could have taken it?"

Tom could have told the Chief—but he didn't!

THE PEACE-MAKER

"THE spells of Nogoro must be mighty indeed to make the magic box work again!" remarked Tom, looking Nogoro straight in the eye. "Mightier even than the white man's magic, maybe! Come, old Nogoro, we will make a match, you and I, to see whose magic is the greater!"

The Witch Doctor hesitated, looking uncertainly at Tom, and not knowing what to do next. There was a murmur of approval from the watching warriors and the Chief. Tom turned back to where Kalongo was waiting by the suitcase.

The young native had opened the case and taken from it a small collapsible table, which he had erected and covered with a dark cloth. Johnny Baker had been curious to know what the bag contained, and had he been there he would have seen at once that it was a conjuror's outfit, complete with a red cloak bearing the words "Marvo the Magician"—the name used by Tom when giving amateur performances.

Tom had already shown the tribe his skill in producing eggs from nowhere—now he would have to give the performance of a lifetime in real conjuring if he was going to get the better of the Witch Doctor! His cleverness at his hobby of conjuring had got him out of many a tight corner when dealing with simple tribesmen!

He started off with some simple card tricks.

"Here it is!" he cried, holding a card right under Nogoro's nose, "and here it isn't—!" making a pass with his hand, and then showing the Witch Doctor an empty palm.

The people watching grunted in astonishment, and Nogoro backed away slightly, looking startled. Tom tossed the pack of cards aside and put his hat on the table.

"See how the white men cook their food!" he cried, breaking two eggs into the hat and tossing in a handful of meal and what looked like some strips of meat. He tapped the hat brim with a stick, peered

inside it, and then offered the contents round to his delighted audience. The mess he had made had mysteriously turned into a dozen small meat pasties, which the Chief and his warriors seemed to find delicious!

The Witch Doctor muttered angrily, but Tom could see that the old man was badly frightened. He reached down into the suitcase and produced a small vase, which he set upon the table after he had shaken it upside down, to prove that it was empty.

Then he reached a hand inside, and a moment later was pulling out a long string of gaily coloured ribbons, little flags and bright beads, and ornaments and oddments which brought howls of delight from the women and astonished gasps from the men.

And last of all, it seemed from the depths of the wonderful vase, there came the sounds of music! And then there appeared in Tom's hand, dangling for all to see, a magic box—just like the one which had disappeared from the village of Taloofoa!

With a yell of terror old Nogoro broke from the group and scuttled for the shelter of the jungle—a moment later he had vanished among the trees, in the direction of the Voodoo Hut. It was there that Tom found him half an hour later, and Nogoro shrank back as he approached, already scared out of his wits by the music blaring from the hut.

"Stand up, Nogoro, and have no fear!" said Tom with a smile. "The magic box inside is yours—but put an end to this raiding, or it shall be taken from you!"

"I care nothing for the magic box!" Nogoro cried, staggering to his feet. "I hoped the raids would drive the Boss Baker away! The white man's ways are not the ways of my people—and I feared for them! They are simple, but they are content—and would they be if the white men took them from their Valley?"

"The white man does not want to take them from the Valley!" said Tom gently, "but to live in peace with them. Go back to your tribe and look after them as you did before—they await your return! And you and I and the white trader will live as friends and neighbours, each in his own place!"

* * *

"So now you see what I mean, Johnny, when I say that I treat 'em right and I get no trouble!" laughed Tom that evening, when he had told Johnny Baker of the day's happenings. "Old Nogoro wasn't interested in your goods or your radios—just in the well-being of his own people! You'll get no more trouble from the Taloofoa tribe!"

"You got more results with that bag of tricks of yours than I would with all my guns!" admitted Johnny with a smile. "No wonder you get no trouble in your district, Tom!"

THE END

VILGAR ROUTS THE ROMAN INVADERS

By JEFF GOULD

IN THE DAYS WHEN CONQUERING ROMAN LEGIONS INVADED BRITAIN, MANY A GALLANT BRITISH CHIEF FOUGHT WITH MIGHT AND MAIN TO KEEP THE PRECIOUS FLAME OF FREEDOM BURNING.

SUCH A CHIEF WAS VILGAR, WHO, IN THE CAUSE OF LIBERTY, WOULD LEAVE HIS OWN DOMAIN TO ATTACK THE ROMAN FORCES IN AREAS LESS STRONG.

FRESH FROM ONE VICTORIOUS BATTLE, VILGAR AND HIS LOYAL BRITONS GALLOPED TOWARDS THEIR VILLAGE —

BY MY TROTH, 'TIS GOOD TO SEE OUR HOMES AGAIN. THIS CORNER OF OUR FAIR COUNTRY WILL NEVER BOW TO THE ACCURSED ROMAN LEGIONS

WITH YOU TO LEAD US, VILGAR, WE WILL EVER REMAIN FREE!



THEN, AS THE JUBILANT BAND NEARED THEIR SIMPLE, HOMELY HUTS —

SEE — ONE OF OUR VILLAGERS APPROACHES IN HASTE. HE BRINGS LOYAL GREETINGS, I'LL WAGER — PERHAPS NEWS OF A FEAST, TOO!



BUT THE NEWCOMER'S WORDS WIPED THE SMILE FROM THE CHIEF'S FACE

MOST NOBLE VILGAR, I HAVE DIRE NEWS FOR YOU! WHILE YOU HAVE BEEN GONE, A GREAT ROMAN FORCE HAS COME. THEY ARE BUILDING A FORT EVEN NOW ON WILDWOOD HILL. AND FROM THERE THEY WILL BE ABLE TO DESCEND ON US AND CRUSH US!



THE YOUNG CHIEF'S EYES GREW HARD WITH ANGER

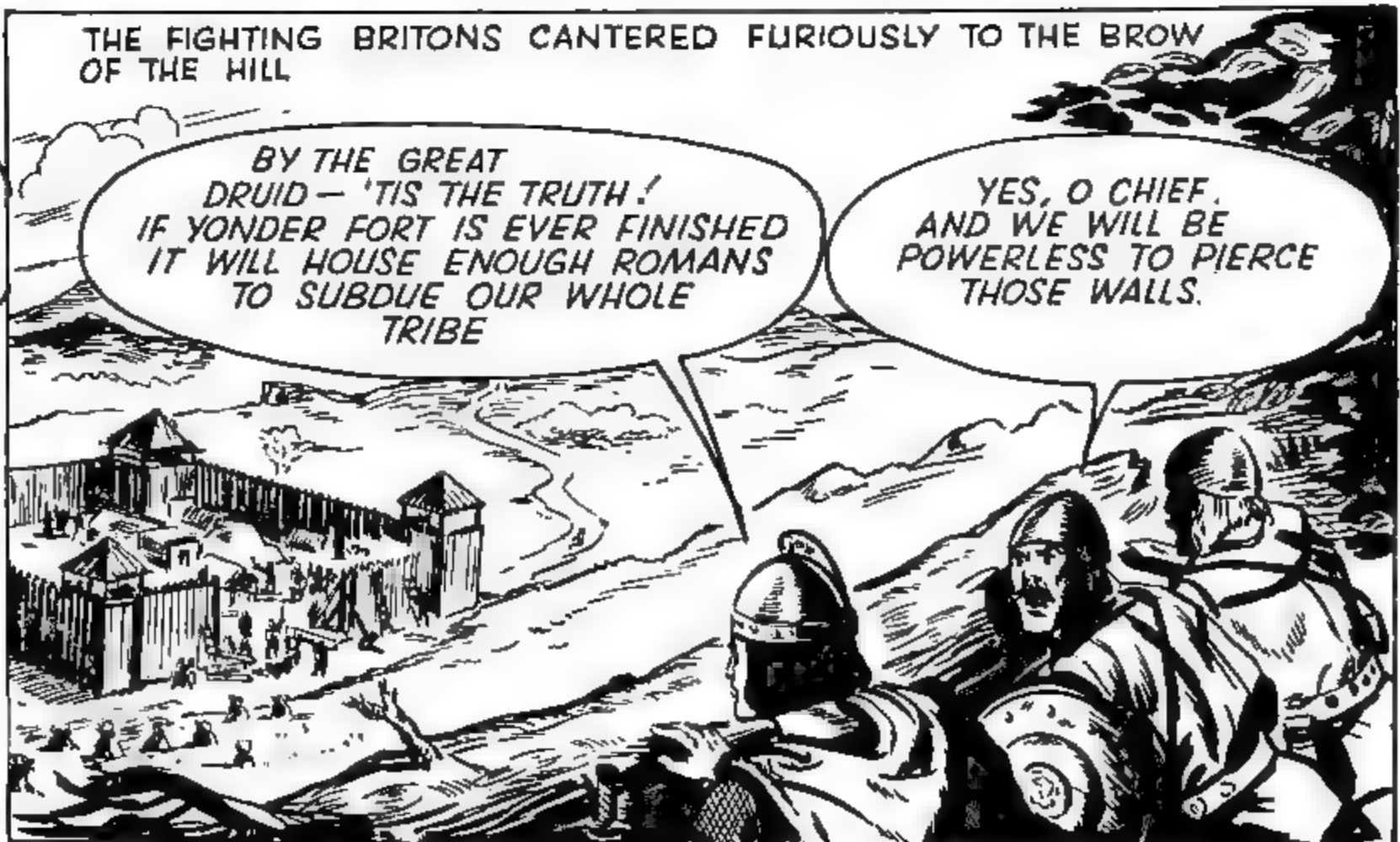
SO — THE FOREIGN INVADERS SEEK TO BREAK OUR RESISTANCE BY PLACING A STRONGHOLD IN OUR MIDST! SPUR YOUR MOUNTS, MEN — TO WILDWOOD HILL TO SPY OUT THIS MENACE TO OUR FREEDOM!



THE FIGHTING BRITONS CANTERED FURIOUSLY TO THE BROW OF THE HILL

BY THE GREAT DRUID — 'TIS THE TRUTH! IF YONDER FORT IS EVER FINISHED IT WILL HOUSE ENOUGH ROMANS TO SUBDUCE OUR WHOLE TRIBE

YES, O CHIEF, AND WE WILL BE POWERLESS TO PIERCE THOSE WALLS.



BELOW, THE ROMAN OVERSEER, TULLUS, WAS KEEPING HIS MEN HARD AT WORK



FASTER, YOU DOGS—
FASTER! ONCE WE CAN REST
SAFE WITHIN THIS FORT, EVEN
VILGAR HIMSELF WILL HAVE
TO OBEY OUR
COMMANDS

BUT A DARING PLAN WAS ALREADY TAKING
SHAPE IN VILGAR'S AGILE BRAIN



WE MUST STRIKE
BEFORE 'TIS TOO LATE.
AND METHINKS THOSE
CORN-STOOKS YONDER
CAN HELP US PRESS
HOME A TELLING
RAID

CORN-STOOKS,
SIRE? WHAT AID
GIVE THEY? ONCE
WE VENTURE OUT
INTO THE OPEN
THERE, WE'LL BE
EASY TARGETS FOR
THE ROMAN
SPEARMEN

VILGAR BECKONED TO HIS MEN TO FOLLOW HIM. THEN—



TAKE HEART, GOOD HAL.
WE'LL MOVE THE STOOKS FORWARD
IN FRONT OF US. UNDER THEIR
COVER WE'LL BE ABLE TO GET NEAR
ENOUGH TO THE FORT TO MAKE A
SURPRISE ATTACK!

WITHIN SECONDS THE OPERATION WAS
WELL UNDER WAY



ONWARD,
MY BROTHERS!
THEY'LL NEVER SUSPECT
THAT GOOD ENGLISH GRAIN
THIS DAY HIDES SHARP
ENGLISH BLADES!

MINUTES PASSED. ALERT FOR TROUBLE, A ROMAN
SENTRY SUDDENLY NUDGED HIS COMPANION



LOOK, CAPELLO—
SURELY THOSE CORN-
STOOKS HAVE COME
CLOSER?

IMPOSSIBLE,
LEO—IMPOSSIBLE!
'TIS BUT THE SUMMER
SUN PLAYING KNAVISH
TRICKS WITH THINE
EYES

BUT AN INSTANT LATER VILGAR LEAPT TO HIS FEET



ATTACK, BRITONS!
RISE UP AND DRIVE THE
FOREIGN CURS DOWN THE
HILL! FREEDOM FOR
EVER!

DEATH
TO THE ROMAN
INVADERS!

TULLUS GAVE A YELL OF RAGE, AS THE SENTRIES FRANTICALLY SOUNDED THE ALARM

SO THE BARBARIANS DARE TO ATTACK US IN BROAD DAYLIGHT? UNCOVER THE SECRET DEFENCE WEAPON—WE'LL TEACH THE IMPUDENT JACKALS A LESSON THE ROMAN WAY!



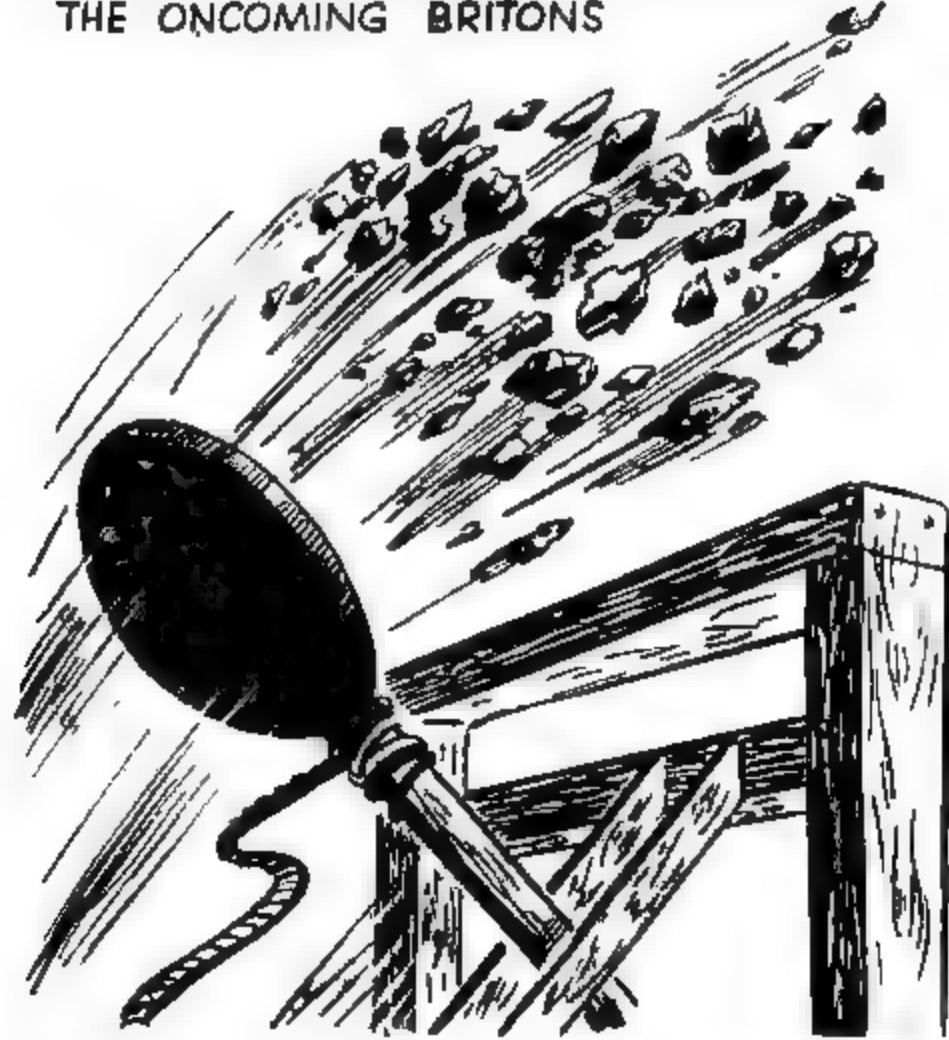
A GROUP OF SOLDIERS RACED TO A KIND OF CATAPULT

'TIS ALL READY AND LOADED WITH RAZOR-SHARP FLINTS, CAPTAIN!

THEN TAKE AIM, MEN—FIRE!



A DEADLY HAIL HURTTLED TOWARDS THE ONCOMING BRITONS



THE MISSILES SCYTHED THROUGH THEIR RANKS

AAAAAH! THESE STONES CUT LIKE SPEAR-POINTS!

AND MORE COME FROM YONDER INFERNAL MACHINE! WE'LL ALL BE MOWN DOWN!



IGNORING THE NERVE-SHATTERING BOMBARDMENT, VILGAR FLUNG HIMSELF FORWARD

THE BOMBARDMENT MUST BE STOPPED, OR OUR ATTACK WILL END IN DISASTER!



SWORD FLASHING, THE BRITISH CHIEF CLEAVED HIS WAY THROUGH THE ENEMY AND SEVERED THE SLING-CORD OF THE GIANT WEAPON



TULLUS THE OVERSEER HOWLED WITH FURY

BY THE GODS O' WAR—'TIS THE ACCURSED VILGAR HIMSELF. SLAY HIM! TEN PIECES OF SILVER TO THE MAN WHO CUTS HIM DOWN!



FIGHTING EVERY FOOT OF THE WAY, VILGAR WAS FORCED BACK BY SHEER WEIGHT OF NUMBERS



THE YOUNG CHIEF DIDN'T REALISE HE WAS GRADUALLY NEARING THE EDGE OF A CLIFF. ALL AT ONCE THE GROUND GAVE WAY UNDER HIS FEET, AND —



EXULTANTLY THE ROMAN SOLDIERS DREW TO A HALT



DISMAYED BY THE TRAGIC LOSS OF VILGAR, THE OUTNUMBERED BRITONS RETREATED



THE ROMAN OVERSEER CROWED WITH TRIUMPH



BUT, UNKNOWN TO ROMANS AND BRITONS ALIKE, A SLENDER ROOT HAD SAVED VILGAR'S LIFE!



CAUTIOUSLY HE INCHED HIS WAY TO SAFETY

DOUBTLESS THEY
ALREADY CELEBRATE MY
TIMELY DEATH! THEY LITTLE
DREAM THAT VILGAR LIVES
TO FIGHT ANOTHER
DAY



THEN, AS THE BRITISH CHIEF WAS HASTENING
BACK TOWARDS HIS VILLAGE—

HAH!
A ROMAN COURIER
SPEEDS THIS WAY— WITH A
MESSAGE FOR THE FORT
COMMANDER, NO DOUBT.
I'LL WAYLAY HIM— AND AVAIL
MYSELF OF BOTH THE HORSE
AND CHARIOT— AND
THE MESSAGE



LITHELY VILGAR CLAMBERED INTO THE BOUGHS
OF AN OLD OAK TREE

BY SATURN,
I'LL GIVE THIS
FOREIGN UPSTART
A SHOCK HE'LL NEVER
FORGET



AND AS THE CHARIOT
THUNDERED BENEATH—

WHAT
IN JOVE'S
NAME—?



A BONE-JOLTING PUNCH RENDERED
THE ROMAN UNCONSCIOUS

'TIS
A BRITON—
AAAAH!

VERILY YOU
SPEAK WORDS
OF TRUTH! NOW
TO SEE WHAT
NEWS YOU
BRING



VILGAR SCANNED THE PARCH-
MENT SCROLL WITH MOUNTING
EXCITEMENT



EAGERLY THE YOUNG CHIEF
PITCHED THE STUNNED ROMAN
INTO THE CHARIOT AND THEN
SEIZED THE REINS

STONE COLUMNS
FOR THE FORT? WHY, THEY
MAY ENABLE US TO RID OUR-
SELVES OF ROMAN RULE!
I'LL HASTEN TO THE
VILLAGE AND REVEAL
WHAT I HAVE IN
MIND



IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE THE AMAZED BRITONS SAW THEIR "DEAD" CHIEF AGAIN!



WHAT
MAGIC IS THIS?
VILGAR LIVES!
VILGAR LIVES!

OUR GREAT
CHIEF RIDES BACK
TO LEAD US
ONCE MORE!

VILGAR SMILED AT THE VILLAGERS' AMAZEMENT



'TIS NO MAGIC,
GOOD PEOPLE! IT TAKES
MORE THAN A HANDFUL OF
ROMAN HOUNDS TO HUNT
VILGAR TO HIS DEATH!
BIND WELL THIS PRISONER,
MEN— THEN GATHER YE
AROUND ME

QUICKLY HE SHOWED THEM
THE SCROLL

SEE—THE OPPRESSORS
BRING STONE COLUMNS TO
FINISH THE FORT. BUT I HAVE
A SCHEME TO TURN THE TABLES
ON THEM— ONE WHICH NEEDS
USE OF THIS CHARIOT, SOME
CHALK, AND IRON-NERVED
DARING! NOW LISTEN
CAREFULLY—



AND SO, THE NEXT MORNING, AS THE GREAT COLUMNS WERE ALMOST
WITHIN SIGHT OF THE ROMAN FORT—



'Twill NOT
BE LONG BEFORE
WE REACH FORT
AJAX NOW

AYE! AND WITH
VILGAR DEAD WE'LL
HAVE NO TROUBLE FROM
THE REBELLIOUS BRITONS!

BUT SUDDENLY ONE OF THE SOLDIERS STARED
IN PETRIFIED HORROR



BY
SATURN—LOOK!
LOOK!

CHARGING TOWARDS THEM WAS AN EERILY-GLOWING
CHARIOT AND CHARIOTEER!



IT IS A
GHOST— THE GHOST
OF VILGAR!

AAAH!
THE BRITISH CHIEF
RETURNS FROM THE
DEAD TO HAUNT US
AND TAKE HIS
REVENGE!

PANIC-STRICKEN BY THE SPECTRAL FIGURE THE TERRIFIED ROMANS TOOK TO THEIR HEELS



FLEE-
FLEE FOR
YOUR
LIVES

RUN,
ERE THE
SPIRIT
SLAYS US
ALL

AS THE SUPERSTITIOUS ROMANS VANISHED, LAUGHING BRITONS EMERGED FROM THEIR ROADSIDE HIDING-PLACE

HO! DIDST
HEAR THE PROUD
CONQUERORS' KNEES
KNOCKING, MY
HEARTIES?

NOT ONE OF
THE DOGS GUESSED
THAT THE "GHOST"
WAS VILGAR-THAT HE HAD
DAUBED HIMSELF AND THE
CHARIOT WITH
CHALK!



SWERVING BACK ALONG LITTLE-KNOWN WOODLAND PATHS, VILGAR REJOINED HIS COMRADES



THE ROMANS
MAY RECOVER THEIR
WITS SOON, MEN, BUT
BY THEN THEY'LL BE
TOO LATE. QUICK-GET
THESE STONE COLUMN
TO THE BROW OF
WILDWOOD
HILL

THEN, STRAINING EVERY MUSCLE VILGAR'S MEN UNLOADED THE HEAVY VEHICLES AND



THE INVADERS
WERE EXPECTING THE
COLUMNS TO ARRIVE
THIS MORNING-BUT
NOT IN THIS WAY,
I WARRANT!

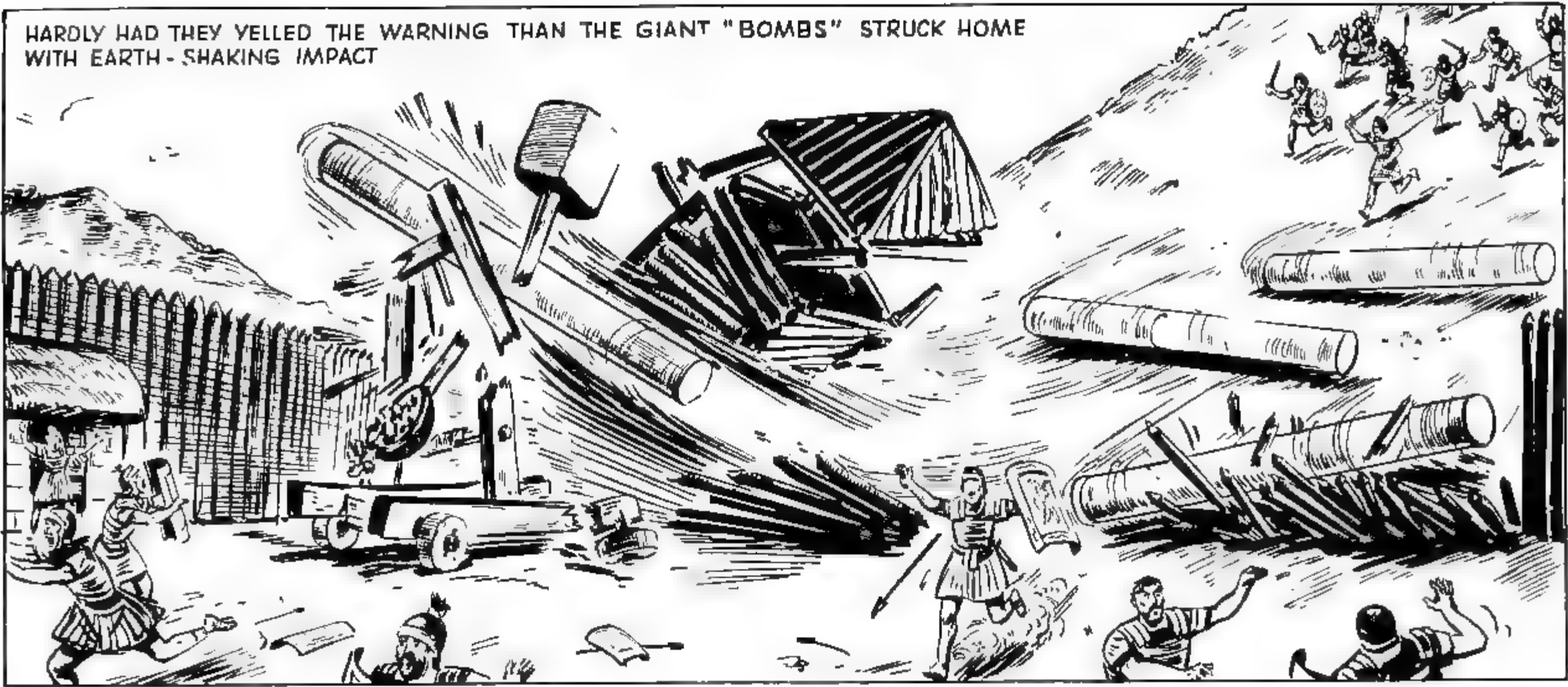
WITH EVER-INCREASING SPEED THE HUGE MASSES OF STONE RUMBLLED DOWN TOWARDS THE FORT. SENTRIES WHO SAW THEM COULD SCARCELY BELIEVE THEIR EYES



SOUND THE
ALARM! WE SHALL ALL
BE CRUSHED!



HARDLY HAD THEY YELLED THE WARNING THAN THE GIANT "BOMBS" STRUCK HOME WITH EARTH-SHAKING IMPACT



LED BY TULLUS, THE ROMANS FLED BEFORE THE TREMENDOUS BRITISH ATTACK WHICH FOLLOWED



LEE TO THE VALLEY! OUR FORT'S A SHATTERED WRECK THE BARBARIANS OVERRUN US

IN A MATTER OF MINUTES, VILGAR AND HIS FIGHTING BAND WERE IN COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE BATTERED FORTIFICATIONS



PURSEE THEM NOT, MY LOYAL ONES. WITH THEIR STONES THEY HOPED TO CONQUER US, BUT WITH THEIR STONES THEY WERE CONQUERED!

AND SOON THE JUBILANT BRITONS WERE TOASTING VILGAR WITH ROMAN RATIONS!



ALL GLORY TO OUR NOBLE CHIEF!

HAIL, VILGAR

I THANK YOU, MY WARRIORS. LONG LIVE FREEDOM, AND ALL FREE FIGHTING MEN OF BRITAIN!



THE END

BRUCE KENT INVITES YOU TO SPOT THE CLUE

ACE DETECTIVE BRUCE KENT AND HIS ASSISTANT, JIM, WERE VISITING A WAXWORKS WHEN IN BURST THREE MASKED GUNMEN!



QUICK AS A FLASH, BRUCE DREW HIS AUTOMATIC. BUT THE GANG-LEADER FIRED FIRST

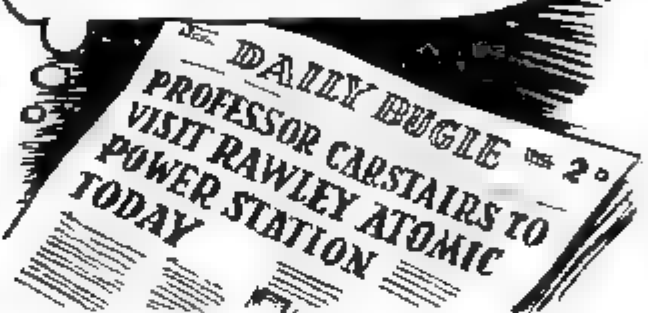


WHAT HAPPENED NEXT MADE JIM GOGGLE IN AMAZEMENT



THE ESCAPING GANG AVOIDED PURSUIT BY LOCKING THE DOORS BEHIND THEM. PUZZLING OVER THE STRANGE THEFT, BRUCE SUDDENLY DREW A NEWSPAPER FROM HIS POCKET

AH, I THOUGHT SO. SEE THIS NEWS-ITEM? I'VE A HUNCH THE ROBBERY IS LINKED WITH IT. AS SOON AS WE'RE OUT OF HERE, WE'LL HEAD FOR RAWLEY



AN HOUR LATER, THE 'TECS WERE STANDING NEAR THE HEAVILY-GUARDED ENTRANCE TO RAWLEY



AS THE CAR AND ITS MOTOR-CYCLE ESCORT SWEEP IN BETWEEN THE OPENED GATES, THE VIGILANT 'TEC TENSED



HE TALKED SWIFTLY WITH THE SENIOR GATE-GUARD, AND THE MAN AGREED TO DRIVE HIM AND JIM THROUGH THE SMALL WOOD



AS THEY REACHED A CLEARING JIM FROWNED



BRUCE SMILED GRIMLY



THAT WAS A QUESTION BRUCE COULDN'T ANSWER — YET. HE LED THE WAY ROUND THE OUTSIDE OF THE ATOM STATION, AND SUDDENLY —



CLIMBING A STAIRWAY, THEY SCANNED THE INTERIOR OF THE VAST POWER PLANT



ALMOST IMMEDIATELY THE SABOTEURS SPOTTED THE 'TECS



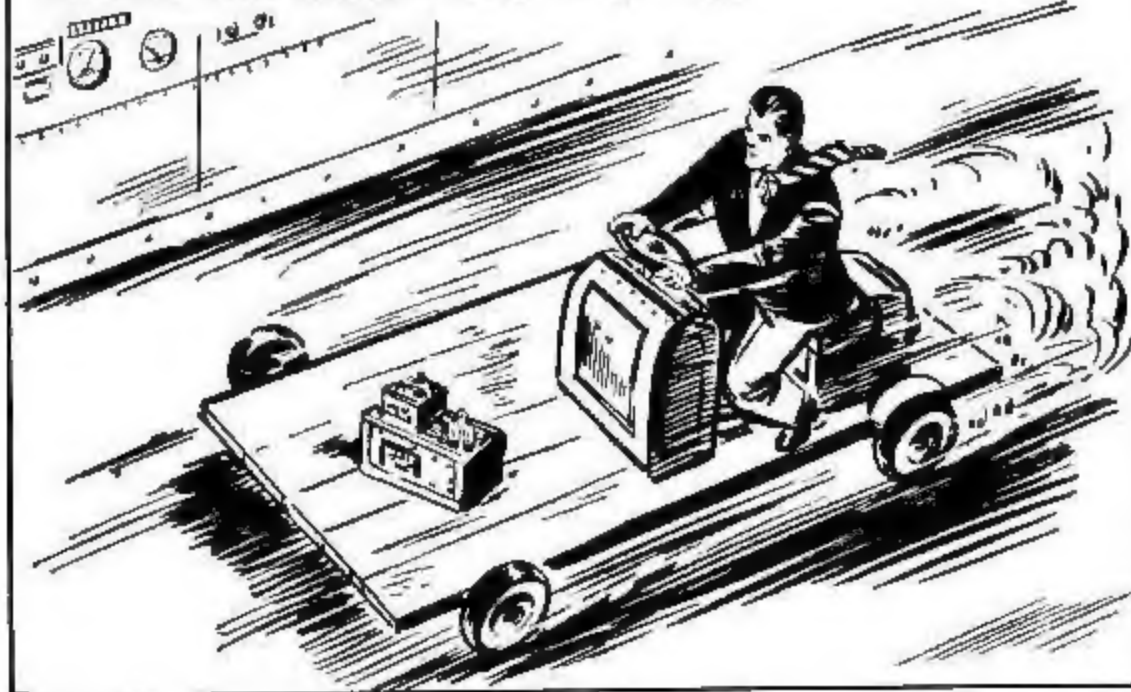
BRUCE HEARD THE GLOATING WORDS. BUT, UNDAUNTED, HE LEAPT ON TO A CRANE-CABLE AND SWARMED DOWN IT



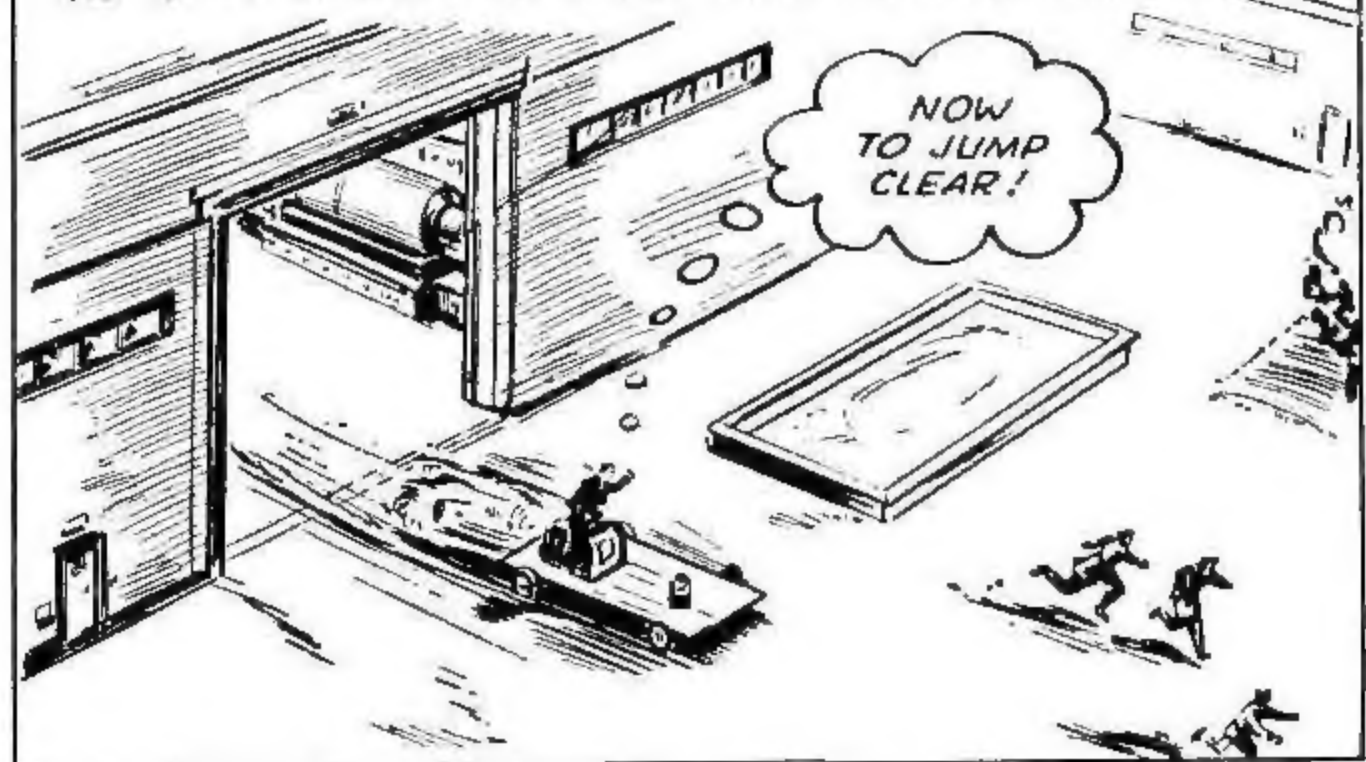
DARINGLY HE SNATCHED UP THE BOMB



PLACING IT ON AN ELECTRIC TROLLEY, HE DROVE RECKLESSLY TOWARDS THE DOORWAY THROUGH WHICH THE SABOTEURS HAD FLED



THE NIPPY VEHICLE SHOT OUT INTO THE OPEN AIR



HARDLY HAD BRUCE REACHED SAFETY THAN THE BOMB BLEW UP!



THE SABOTEURS, DAZED BY THE MIGHTY BLAST, WERE EASILY CAPTURED. THEN BRUCE EXPLAINED





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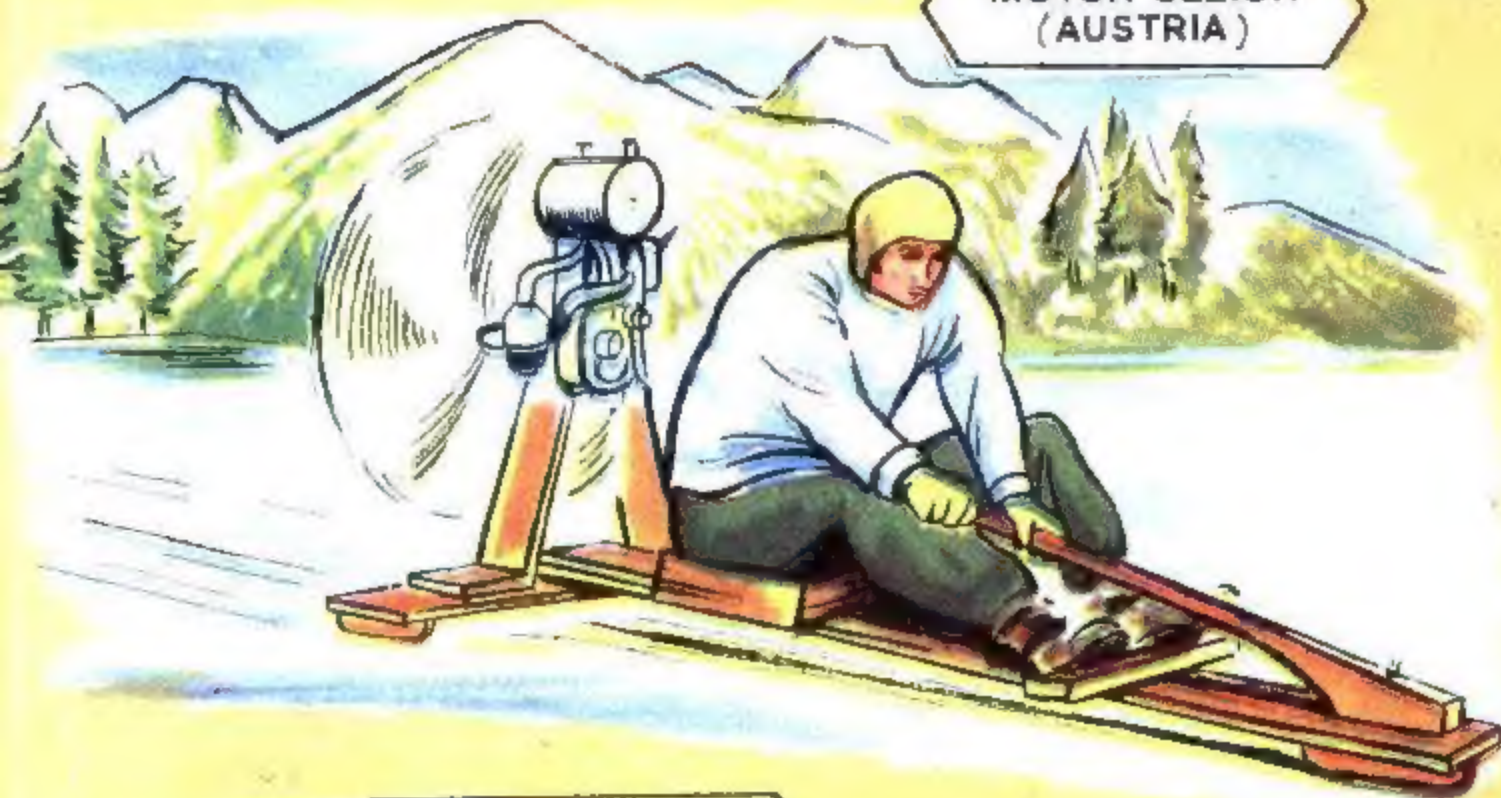
How People Travel

IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

ELEPHANT
(INDIA)



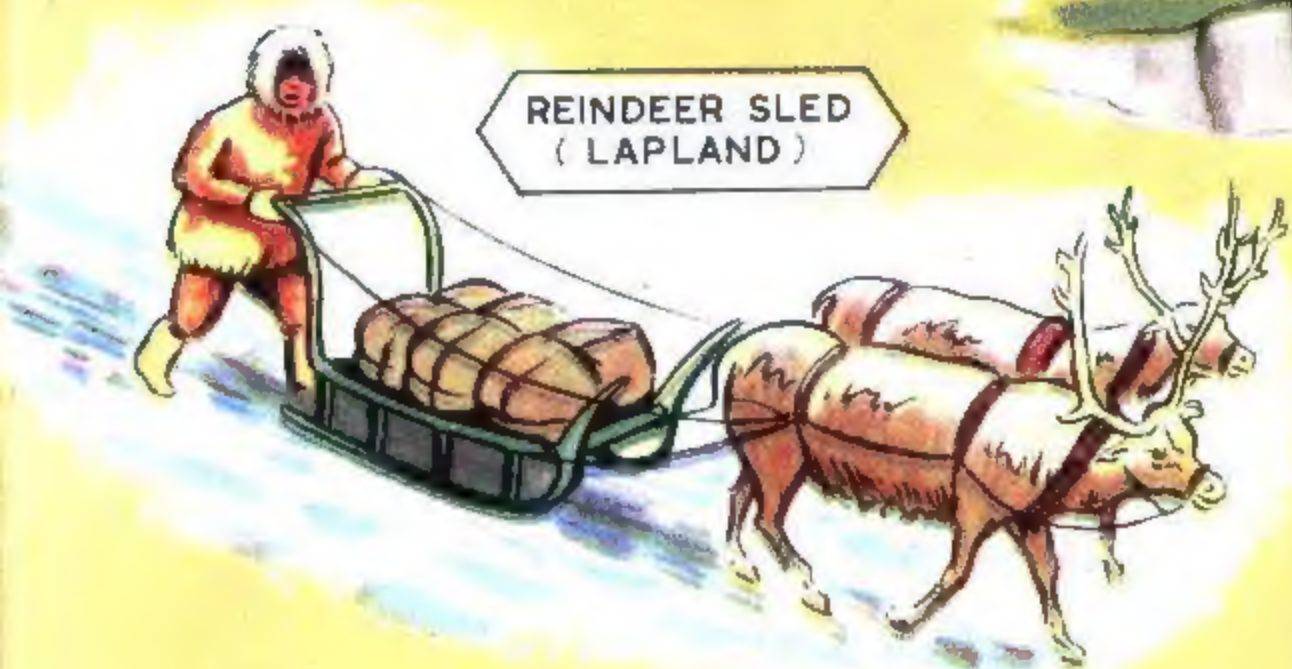
MOTOR SLEIGH
(AUSTRIA)



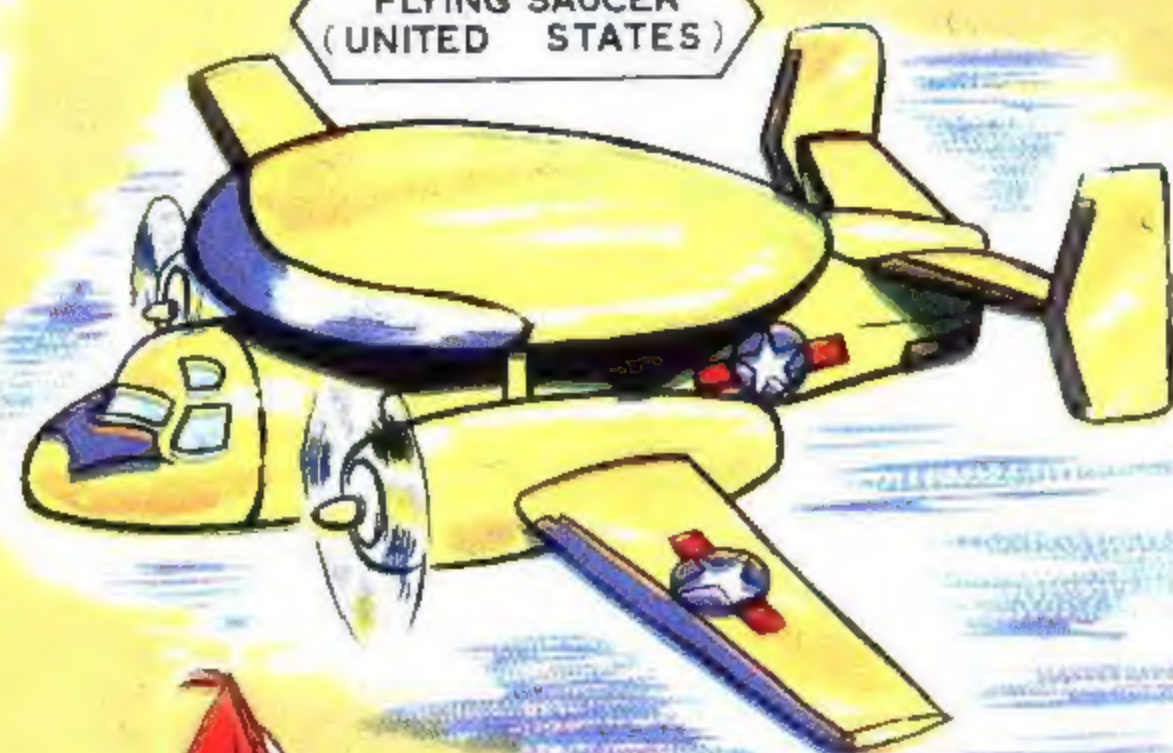
KAYAK
(USED BY ESKIMOS)



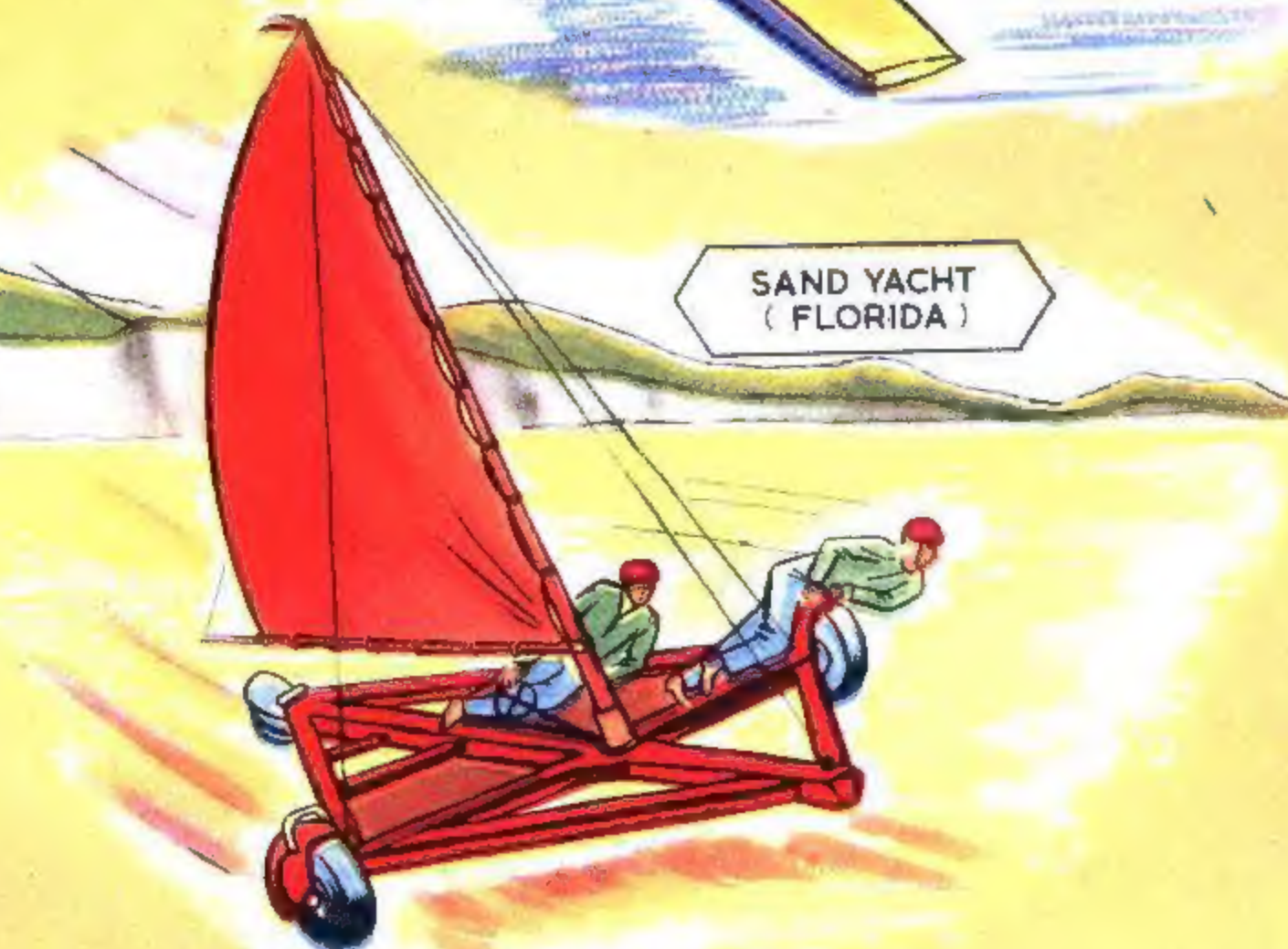
REINDEER SLED
(LAPLAND)



"FLYING SAUCER"
(UNITED STATES)



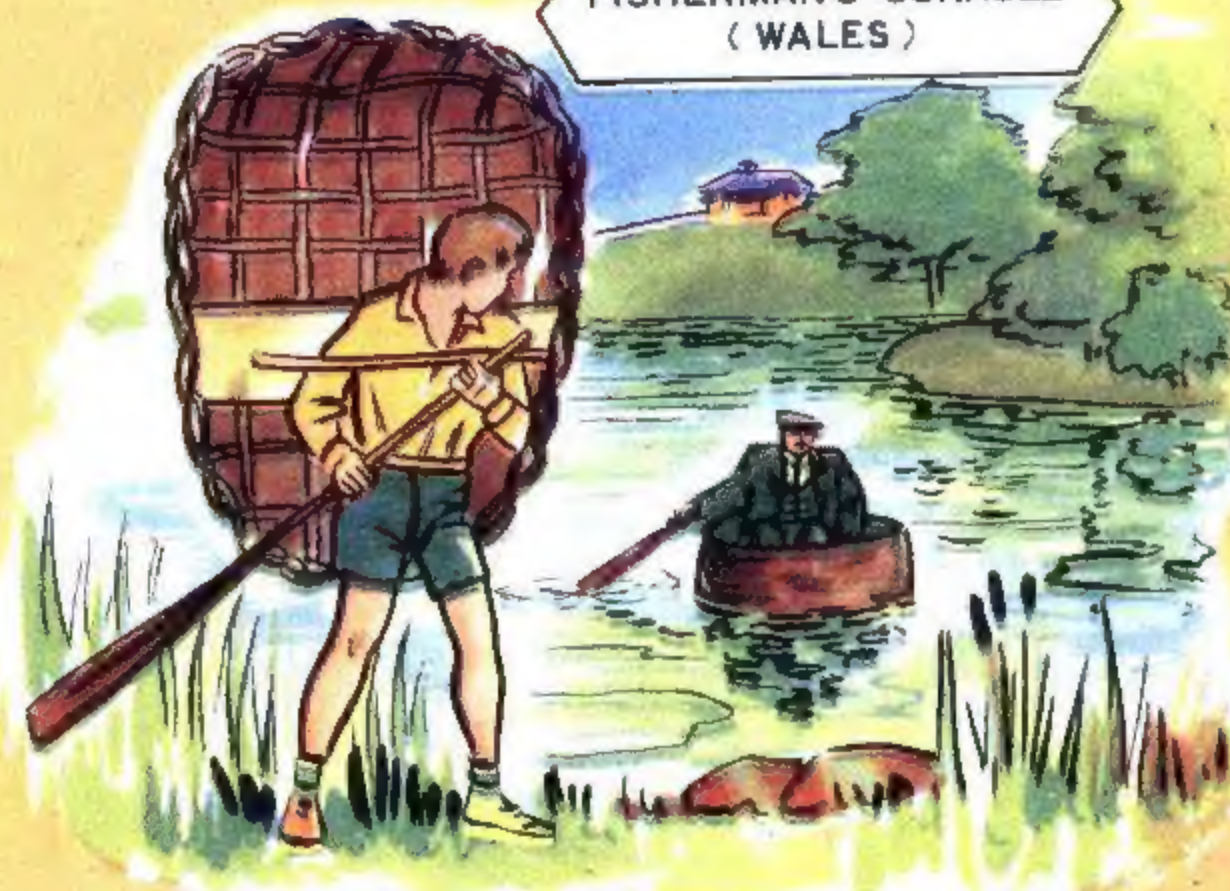
SAND YACHT
(FLORIDA)



KAGO
(JAPAN)



FISHERMAN'S CORACLE
(WALES)



OX WAGON
(SOUTH AFRICA)



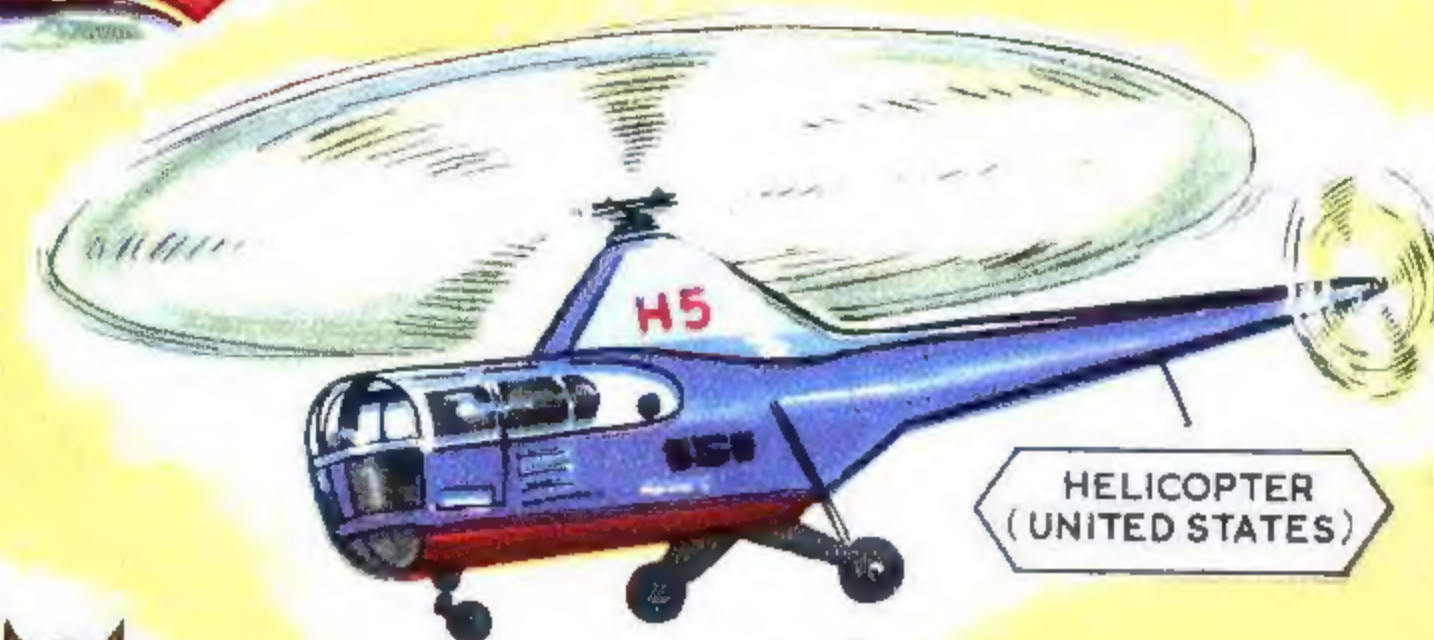
CANOE
(CENTRAL AFRICA)



HAND CART
(CHINA)



DROSHKY
(RUSSIA)

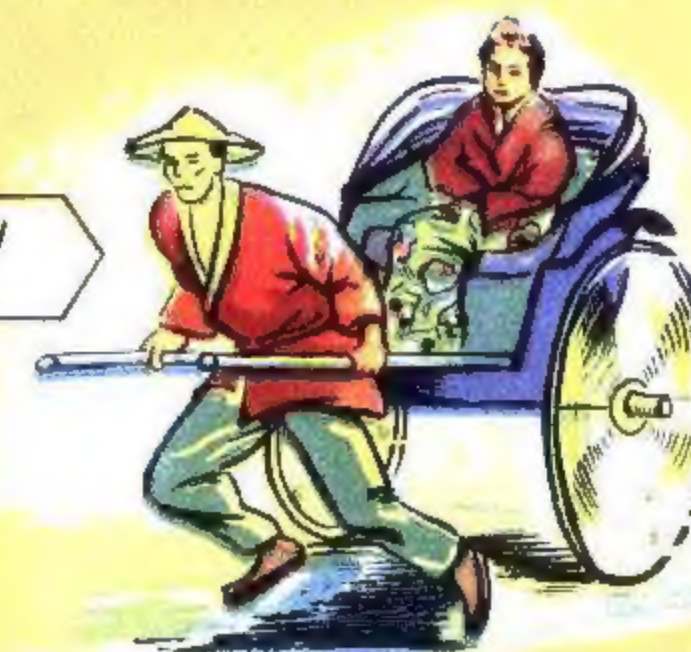


HELICOPTER
(UNITED STATES)

OUTRIGGER CANOE
(SOUTH SEAS)



RICKSHAW
(JAPAN)



SNOCAT
(ANTARCTIC)



